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From the
"Doubnow Girls"
of 1935

AN OUTLINE
OF
JEWISH HISTORY

BY

S. M. DOUBNOW

IN THREE VOLUMES

Authorized Translation from the Russian

VOL. I.
BIBLICAL EPOCH

MAX N. MAISEL
PUBLISHER
424 Grand Street, New York, N. Y.
1929

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CHAPTER I

Stories of the Hebrew Patriarchs.

§ 1.

The Ancient East and the Semites.

N olden times, about four thousand years ago, in the countries of Asia on the shores of the Mediterranean, lived tribes which by their origin and language belonged to the Semitic race. They had originally migrated from the vast Arabian plains to the neighboring land of Mesopotamia which lay between two rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates.

The legends of antiquity tell how Mesopotamia was considered "the cradle of the human race" because it was there that the first great kingdoms of the East, Babylonia and Assyria, were founded. The Semites became so widely dispersed over those countries that gradually most of the natives intermarried with them; the Semitic language became the common tongue of the Babylonians and the Assyrians, and many

of the kings of both countries were of Semitic descent.

From the starting point of Mesopotamia, Semitic tribes penetrated into lands nearer the Mediterranean coast. Some settled in Aram (or Syria), others in Canaan (or Palestine), others still, of a nomadic character, pushed on further south until they reached the African coast of the Mediterranean where stood Egypt, the third great kingdom of the ancient East. These Semites, whom the Egyptians called Hyksos, became, for several centuries, the rulers over lower and middle Egypt. (1600-1200 B. C.)

Besides the Semitic groups that settled in these various countries, there were shepherd tribes which settled nowhere but wandered from place to place, living in tents outside of cities. Unlike the settler-tribes, these nomads never intermingled with the natives of the countries of their sojourn, but kept entirely to themselves, retaining their physical and mental characteristics intact. To these pure Semites belonged a tribe known as the Hebrews, or Jews. Their ancestors had lived in Babylonia, whence they migrated northwards to Aram and later to Canaan. In Canaan the newcomers were given the name of "Hebrews," which means, "those from across the river," i. e., from across the Euphrates. The leader of the Canaanite He-

brews was the elder of the tribe, whose name was Abraham. He is known as the patriarch of the Hebrew people.

The legends of the Semites told of the creation of the world, of the appearance of man on earth and of the origin of the different races. In the beginning, these legends were common to the Babylonians, the Assyrians, the Arameans, the Canaanites and the Hebrews, but as time went on they underwent certain modifications according to each nation's religious beliefs and conditions of living. They were altered considerably by the descendants of Abraham, who had become worshippers of one sole God, separating themselves from their kindred tribes who remained heathens, worshippers of many gods. The legends of the ancient Hebrews were preserved in their holy book, the Bible.

§ 2.

The Origin of the World and of Man.

Genesis, the first of the Hebrews' holy books, tells how men appeared on earth, how they formed different races and how the Hebrew people derived their origin from amongst them.

In six days, God created Heaven and earth and everything within them. In the beginning the earth was a desert and lay in darkness. Then God said "Let there be light" and there

was light. This happened on the first day of creation. On the second day, space, air and the firmament were created, on the third, water was divided from land, forming oceans, lakes and rivers, and on the land grass, trees and other vegetation appeared. On the fourth day the planets were set in the sky, the greatest, the sun, shining upon the earth in the daytime and the lesser ones, moon and stars, at night. On the fifth day the first living creatures came upon earth, fish in the water, winged fowl in the air. God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply." On the sixth day animals in their different kinds appeared upon the land, and on the same day was created man, the superior of them all. God created man out of dust, breathed into him a living soul, and gave him strength and reason, so that he might rule over all the other creatures on earth. He called the first man Adam, which means "created of dust or earth" (Hebrew, *adomah*). Thus, in six days, God had created the whole world, animate and inanimate, and on the seventh day, the Bible says, He rested from His labors, which is why the seventh day of the week, the Sabbath, is still kept by the Hebrews as a day of rest and peace.

Having created man, God gave him Eden for his dwelling-place, which is part of the beautiful Mesapotamian country irrigated by four rivers. Adam lived in a garden filled with mag-

nificent fruit-trees. In the midst of the garden grew two trees, one the tree of Life, the other the tree of Knowledge. And God said to Adam "The fruit of all these trees you may eat, but not the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge."

So Adam lived in the Garden of Eden, happy and carefree, but he was lonely. Then God said: "It is not good that man should be alone; a helpmeet must be created for him." And one day, as Adam lay asleep, God took a rib from his body covering the open place with flesh again, and out of the rib He created a woman. When Adam saw her he said "This is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh." The first woman was called Eve which means "life."

Adam and Eve lived together in the Garden of Eden. They were as happy as children, they went naked and were not ashamed of their nakedness. But the happiness of the first man and woman soon came to an end. The wily serpent set himself to persuade Eve to taste the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge which God had forbidden them to touch; once she had tasted of the fruit, said the serpent to her, both she and Adam would know everything and, like God Himself, would obtain the understanding of good and evil. Eve could not overcome her curiosity; she gathered the fruit of the tree and ate it, giving afterwards some to Adam who ate it also. And their eyes were then opened so that

they understood that which they had not understood before. They saw that they were naked and hastened to make themselves coverings of fig-leaves. Then, in fear of the punishment that might follow their disobedience, Adam and Eve hid amongst the trees of the Garden. But very soon Adam heard the voice of God calling: "Where are you?" And Adam answered "I was ashamed of my nakedness and therefore I hid." "Who told you you were naked?" God asked him then, "Have you tasted of the fruit of the Tree which I bade you not to touch?" Adam confessed that he had eaten the fruit, saying that it was his wife who had given it him, and Eve tried to justify herself by telling how the serpent had persuaded her first. Thereupon God cursed the serpent, and to Eve he said: "I will multiply your sorrows; you shall bear your children in pain and your husband shall rule over you." And to both of them He said: "Because of this deed the earth shall be accursed; you shall eat in sorrow all the days of your life and in the sweat of your brow shall you eat your bread until you return unto the earth, for dust you are and to dust shall you return."

Thus were the first man and woman condemned to labor and suffering on account of their first transgression. It was no longer God's will that Adam and Eve should remain in

Eden; He drove them forth and they were compelled to live by the work of their hands tilling the soil for their bread.

§ 3.

Adam's Descendants.

Two sons were born to Adam and Eve; the name of the elder was Cain and of the younger, Abel. Cain worked in the fields and Abel was a shepherd. One day the two brothers brought offerings to God, Cain fruit from his land and Abel the finest sheep from his flock. The conduct of the younger brother was more pleasing in the eyes of God than was the elder's, and He looked with favour upon Abel's offering, ignoring the offering of Cain. This enraged Cain, and jealousy of his brother stirred in him until one day when they two were alone in the fields, Cain fell upon Abel and slew him.

Then the murderer heard the voice of God calling to him: "Where is your brother Abel?" and Cain replied saying, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" But God, who knew all that had occurred said: "What have you done? The blood of your brother is crying to me from the earth. Be accursed henceforth; the earth shall yield you no more fruit and you shall become a wanderer in the world and never know peace." "Great is my sin," repented Cain, "and

it cannot be forgiven me. Now am I driven out of my own land to be a wanderer forever more and whoever meets with me may kill me." But God set a mark upon him as a warning that no man should molest him.

The story of Cain and Abel is symbolic of the struggle between the settlers, who were the agricultural tribes and the nomads, who were shepherds. The descendants of Cain adapted themselves more and more readily to the life of settlers in towns and villages. One of the sons of Lamech discovered the art of playing upon the harp and reed-pipe, another invented the art of making vessels of copper and iron.

Besides Cain and Abel, Adam had a third son, Seth, from whom many tribes descended. Little by little men had multiplied greatly upon earth, but as yet had established no social order amongst themselves; there was neither justice nor truth in their dealings with one another; brute force alone prevailed. The strong oppressed and injured the weak and the customs and habits of all were exceedingly primitive.

§ 4.

The Flood.

Seeing that mankind had grown very corrupt, God decided that it should be destroyed in order that room might be made upon the earth for a

new and better race of human beings. This was the period of the tenth generation after Adam, and of all the people then in the world, one righteous man only could be found. His name was Noah, and to him God revealed His intention to annihilate the inhabitants of the earth by means of a flood and showed him how to save himself and his family. "Build a great ark of wood," said God to Noah, "And divide it into cells. Go into that ark and take your family with you. Take also one pair of every species of animal, also enough food to sustain you and your family and all the animals in the ark." And Noah did as he was bidden.

Then the terrible flood began. For forty days and forty nights it rained unceasingly. Deep waters covered the earth, but the ark Noah had built floated in safety upon them. Every living creature perished in the flood; none but the inhabitants of the ark were saved. At last the rain fell no more, the waters began to recede and the ark came to rest upon the high mountain of Arrarat. Noah opened a window and released first a crow and then a dove. The birds flew away but soon came back having found no place to rest upon, for the earth was still covered with water. However, a day came when the dove did not return, and then Noah understood that the waters had subsided and dry land became visible once more. He and his

family left the ark, leading the animals out after them, and Noah built an altar upon which he offered up animals in thanksgiving to God for having saved him. This devotion so pleased God that He promised never again to punish the sins of mankind by flood, and as a token of his everlasting goodwill towards men, He caused the rainbow to appear in the sky. Then God blessed Noah and his children and said to them: "Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth. Let all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the fish of the sea, submit to you; you may eat their flesh as you eat herbs and leaves, but shed no human blood, for man is created in the image of God."

§ 5.

The Separation of Races.

Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham and Japhet, who with their father had been saved in the ark. After the flood Noah and his sons set themselves to till the soil and to plant vineyards, and as time went on children and grandchildren were born to the sons of Noah and the human race once more began to increase until families had grown very numerous and formed into tribes, each consisting of several kindred families. At first all these tribes lived peaceably side by side like one large family, and all

spoke the same language. The valley of Shinar in Babylonia was their chief dwelling-place, and one day, so the legend tells us, the valley-people were inspired with a bold plan; they began to build a city in the midst of which they meant to construct a high tower of brick whose top should reach the sky. "By this means," they said, "we will erect a monument to ourselves, so that we may not be scattered over the whole earth." But God frustrated this insane project by confounding their language, that is, He caused them to speak different tongues so that they were no longer able to understand one another. This compelled them to stop their building and they were then dispersed over the face of the earth. The city they had begun to raise was afterwards called Babel, or Babylon.

From Babylonia the people separated, going to settle in various countries where they lived as distinct tribes each speaking its own language. According to the Hebrew legends, all these tribes were descended from the three sons of Noah. Those living in Western Asia were descendants of Shem and were called Semites after him, and this race included the Assyrians, the Elamites, the Arameans, the Hebrews and the Arabs. The descendants of Ham were the Egyptians, the Cushites, the Turanians and other Asiatic and African tribes. The ances-

tors of the European peoples were the descendants of Japhet.

§ 6.

Abraham, the Patriarch of the Hebrews. The Migration to Canaan.

The following is an account of how the tribe of Hebrews became separated from the main group of Semites:

In the Babylonian city of Ur there lived a descendant of Shem whose name was Terah. He lived there with his sons and grandsons and other members of his family, but in time life in Babylonia became very difficult for him and he gathered his people together, migrating with them northwards to Haran, the land of the Arameans. The aged Terah died soon after reaching Haran and upon his death his family split up, his son Nahor with his family remaining in Aram where they became assimilated with the Arameans. The other son, Abraham, took his wife Sarah, his nephew Lot and the rest of his family and went to live in the adjoining country of Canaan (Palestine). The Canaanites called the newcomers "Hebrews," which means "those from the far shore of a distant river," and this name their descendants bear to this day.

Abraham, the patriarch of the Hebrews, be-

lieved in one God, Creator of Heaven and Earth. Legend tells us that it was God Himself who commanded Abraham to go to Canaan, saying: "Leave your own country and your father's house and go to another land which I shall show you, for there a great people will descend from you."

These new settlers in Canaan were shepherds and cattle-breeders. They wandered all over the country pitching their tents now in one place, now in another, and whenever a tribe proved too large for the place it had found, it would divide into smaller groups which would go elsewhere to settle, and it was in that way that the family of Abraham's nephew Lot, became separated from the rest. Both families possessed great flocks of sheep and many tents for their shepherds, and quarrels over pasture-grounds frequently arose between them. At last Abraham said to Lot: "We are too crowded here all together; let us therefore part and go our several ways." Lot agreed to this suggestion and led his flocks and shepherds in the direction of the Dead Sea on whose shores stood the city of Sodom, while Abraham pitched his tents near the city of Hebron in the plain of Mamre, entering into peaceful alliance with the chief of the Amorites, and living unmolested there as the chief of a small nomadic tribe of Hebrews.

§ 7.

The Adventure of Abraham and the Destruction of Sodom.

It was not long before the peaceful tenor of Abraham's days was often broken by trouble and calamity. There came a famine in Canaan when the people were without bread and the cattle without fodder, and Abraham was temporarily driven away into the adjoining land of Egypt. There great peril awaited the family of Abraham, for the King desired his beautiful wife, Sarah, and resolved to take her from Abraham. No sooner had the Hebrew woman been carried to the king's palace, however, than he and his family fell sick with leprosy, sores and ulcers appearing upon their bodies. The king believed the disease was God's punishment for his having coveted another man's wife, so he sent Sarah back to her husband and ordered them to leave Egypt. Abraham then gathered his family once more together and returned to Canaan.

Shortly afterwards, the tribe of Abraham was forced into a war with the Babylonians, then rulers of Asia. The Kings of Sodom and of four other Canaanite cities on the coast of the Dead Sea, were vassals of the mighty Kings of Elam and Babylonia, but the time came when the

Canaanite kings rebelled against their servitude, refusing to submit any longer to the rule of foreigners. Then the Kings of Elam and Babylonia invaded Canaan, plundering the people of Sodom and the neighbouring cities. The conquerors carried off a great deal of booty and took Abraham's nephew Lot prisoner. When Abraham learned of Lot's fate he went in pursuit of the invaders with several hundred men, and overtaking them in Damascus, which is in Aram, he set Lot free and took back all the booty the Babylonians had seized in Sodom. The King of Sodom was overjoyed at Abraham's victory and offered him the booty as a reward. But Abraham, desiring nothing for himself said, "Not one thread or shoestring more will I take than what I spent on feeding my men." His success against the Babylonians and his unselfishness made the name of Abraham famous throughout Canaan.

But Sodom and the adjoining cities which Abraham had freed from the alien yoke, did not very long survive. Their citizens were extremely wicked and cruel, given to all kinds of violence and robbery and sunken in vice. God revealed to Abraham that a great calamity was about to overtake the sinful inhabitants of Sodom and its neighbour cities, but Abraham implored God to save the Sodomites, saying that some of their people must surely be virtuous.

So God said to him: "I would spare the people of Sodom even if only fifty righteous men could be found amongst them." Once again Abraham begged that the city might be spared even if only ten righteous men could be found, but such was the corruption into which it had fallen that not even ten of its citizens were righteous men. Abraham then warned Lot of the coming destruction of Sodom and Lot hastened to leave the city with his family. When they had gone, torrents of fire and brimstone fell out of the heavens upon Sodom and Gomorrah and the other cities like them. Everything was destroyed in the flames, the people all perished and the whole country became a dismal wilderness. (The land that borders the Dead Sea is the former site of these cities.)

Lot and his family went to the mountains to live and there a son was born to each of his two daughters. The children were named Moab and Ben-Ami and became the founders of the Moabite and the Ammonite tribes, respectively, who in after years founded two separate kingdoms on the eastern banks of the River Jordan.

§ 8.

Ishmael and Isaac.

Abraham and Sarah had already attained to great age and as yet no children had been born

to them. According to the eastern custom, Abraham had also another wife, Hagar, one of his Egyptian slaves. She bore him a son called Ishmael, but this son, being slave-born could not become Abraham's successor as patriarch of the Hebrew people.

When Abraham was almost a hundred years old God revealed to him that his wife Sarah would soon bear him a son. Abraham received the news with amazement and thought "How is it possible that a hundred-year-old man should have children, and ninety-year-old Sarah bear a son?" Sarah, too, laughed when three mysterious strangers, visiting their tent, predicted that within a year she would hold her own son in her arms. However, their prediction came true; within a year Sarah bore a son who received the name of Isaac. When the child was eight days old a certain mark was made upon his body, the same that had previously been made according to God's command, upon the bodies of all male members of the tribe, as a token of an everlasting covenant between the Lord and the Hebrew people. Ever since then, this rite, called circumcision, has been performed upon every Hebrew male child on the eighth day after birth.

The young Isaac liked to play with his half-brother Ishmael, but Sarah was not pleased that her own son and the son of a slave should grow up together as equal heirs of Abraham, so she

insisted that Abraham send Ishmael and Hagar, his mother, away from their home. Abraham was very loth to hurt his son, but he was obliged to do as Sarah bade him, so he sent the two away giving them bread and water to sustain them in their wanderings. Then Hagar went out into the desert where she soon lost her way. Their water had long given out and they had nothing to drink, and Hagar left her child under a bush, saying to herself "I cannot see my child die of thirst!" She sat down a little way off and wept. Soon she heard the voice of God's messenger calling to her, saying: "What troubles you, Hagar? Have no fear, for the Lord has heard the voice of your son. Lift him up and lead him by the hand, for a great nation shall descend from him." Hagar raised her eyes and saw before her a pool of water. She filled her bottle and gave her son to drink. Ishmael remained long in the desert and as he grew up became skilled as a rider and a bowman. His children and their descendants led a nomad life in the Arabian desert south of Palestine, and he is known as the forefather of the Arabs.

§ 9.

Abraham's Ordeal.

At this period, Abraham left Hebron for the city of Gerar in the southwest of Palestine,

and though he lived there amongst the heathen, he remained staunch in his belief in one God. There came a day when God decided to put Abraham's loyalty to the test, so He said to him: "Take Isaac, your beloved son, and bring his as a sacrifice to me upon the mountain of Moriah." Abraham was hard put to it to fulfil this command, but dared not disobey, so he rose early in the morning, saddled his ass and set out with the boy for the appointed place. Isaac thought his father was going to offer up a sheep or ram, and when Abraham had made ready the altar for the sacrifice, the child said: "The wood and the fire are ready, but where is the sheep?" Without answering, Abraham took his son, and bound him and laid him upon the pile of faggots. The knife was raised in his hand when the voice of God was heard from heaven saying: "Abraham, do not lift your hand against the boy or do him harm, for now I know how greatly you fear me when you are willing to sacrifice your only son at my command." Then Abraham looked about him and saw a ram entangled by its horns in the branches of a bush. Overjoyed, the father lifted his son down from the altar and offered up the ram instead. God did not desire human sacrifices such as the heathen Canaanites made to their idols; all He had wished to do in commanding the sacrifice of Isaac was to test the loyalty of

His beloved Abraham, knowing that the patriarch of the Hebrews gave Him his whole devotion and was ready to renounce everything to do His will.

§ 10.

Isaac's Marriage.

Sarah, the wife of Abraham, died at the age of one hundred and twenty-seven years. Abraham mourned her loss and buried her near Hebron in the cave of Machpelah, which was on a stretch of land he had bought from the Hittites, and when all was over the aged patriarch turned his mind to the choosing of a wife for his son Isaac. He sent for his devoted servant, Eleazar, and said to him: "Give me your word that you will not choose a wife for my son from among the daughters of Canaan where we dwell, but that you will go to my own country and choose one there." Eleazar promised, and took ten camels which he loaded with gifts, and set out for Aram (Mesopotamia), where lived the kinsmen of Abraham, his brother Nahor's descendants.

Eleazar stopped his caravan outside the city near a well. The day was declining towards sunset and the hour was approaching when the maidens of the city would come to the well for water. As he waited for their coming, Eleazar

made up his mind. "If I ask one of them for a drink," he said to himself, "and she gives water not to me only but to my camels also, then I shall know that she is the one whom God has destined to be the wife of Isaac." Soon a maiden appeared bearing a pitcher on her shoulder, and after she had filled her pitcher Eleazar hastened towards her saying: "Give me to drink from your pitcher, maiden." Promptly she lifted it from her shoulder and let him drink; then she said: "And now I will get water for your camels." Eleazar looked with great favour upon the kindhearted girl and when she had brought the water for his camels, he offered her a golden ear-ring and two rings, saying: "Tell me whose daughter you are and whether there is room for us in your father's house." The maiden answered that she was Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel and granddaughter of Nahor, and that in her father's house there was room for Eleazar to sleep and also fodder for his camels.

Then she hastened home and told her mother what had happened. Her brother Laban went out to meet Eleazar and brought him to his parents' house. Touched by such hospitality, Eleazar told Rebekah's parents and her brother what was the purpose of his quest and assured them God Himself clearly intended that Rebekah should become the wife of her kinsman

Isaac. Bethuel and Laban replied: "There stands Rebekah before you; take her and let her become the wife of your master's son." Then Eleazar took coins of gold and silver, rich garments also, and gave them to Rebekah, her mother and her brother. And on the following morning Rebekah's parents gave her their blessing and allowed her to go with Eleazar to Canaan.

As they approached the place where stood the tents of Abraham, Eleazar and Rebekah met Isaac in the fields, and when she learnt who he was, Rebekah covered her face with a veil. Then Isaac took her to his father's tents and she became his wife and he loved her.

Abraham lived for some years after Isaac's marriage and died very old, being one hundred and seventy-five years of age. He was buried beside Sarah in the cave of Machpelah near Hebron.

§ 11.

Isaac and His Sons.

Upon Abraham's death, Isaac became the patriach of the tribe of Hebrews living like his father in the southern part of Canaan, breeding cattle and tilling the soil. He had twin sons by his wife Rebekah, one called Esau, the other Jacob. As the boys grew up great differ-

ences in their dispositions could clearly be seen; Esau loved to hunt wild animals and was a "man of the fields," while Jacob preferred the peaceful life of a shepherd and was "a tent-dweller."

One day Esau, returning from the hunt tired and hungry, saw Jacob eating a potage of lentils and asked to share it. But Jacob answered his brother saying: "Give me your birthright in exchange and I will let you have the potage." (Esau was considered the elder twin and would become the head of the family when his father died, as was the Hebrew custom.) "I am starving," said Esau, "and I do not want my birthright," so he gave it up to his brother in return for the potage, not even regretting the bargain. Isaac feigned not to know anything of what had occurred between them and continued to treat Esau as the elder son. Often Esau would take home with him some game he had killed, prepare it himself and offer it to his father. He was Isaac's favorite, and the gentle Jacob was the more beloved of his mother, Rebecca.

One day when Isaac had grown old and almost blind, he called Esau to him and said: "My son, I am very old and may soon die. Take your weapons into the fields and bring down some game which I would have you prepare for me yourself. Then I will bless you before

I die." Rebecca overheard what Isaac said and was unwilling for the parental blessing to be given to Esau instead of to her favorite, Jacob. So she told Jacob of his father's words and bade him outwit his brother by obtaining Isaac's blessing first. Jacob listened to his mother's advice, and bringing two kids from the herd, he killed them and of their flesh Rebecca made Isaac's favourite dish. Which done, she dressed Jacob in Esau's hunting clothes and wrapped the kids' skins about his neck and arms. Jacob carried the food to his father, saying: "Here am I, your elder son, Esau." The blind man passed his hands over the young man and answered in astonishment: "The voice is the voice of Jacob but the hands are hairy like the hands of Esau." Yet he believed it was Esau who stood before him and blessed him, saying "May God give you grain and wine in abundance; may the other nations serve you; you shall be ruler over your brethren."

No sooner had Jacob left his father than Esau returned from his hunting. He too prepared a dish of game and took it to his father. Then Isaac was afraid and asked him: "Who was here before you, to whom I gave my blessing instead?" And Esau understood that his brother had outwitted him and cried out in despair: "Father, have you only one blessing to give? Bless me also!" And Isaac answered:

"I blessed Jacob, telling him that he would become ruler over his brethren; to you, then, I say that you shall defend yourself with your sword, and if your brother's rule become too harsh for you, then you shall cast off his yoke."

Thenceforward Esau hated his brother Jacob. "First he deprived me of my birthright," he complained, "and then robbed me of my father's blessing." And he made up his mind to kill Jacob as soon as their father died. Rebecca, when she discovered Esau's intention, called Jacob to her and said to him: "Flee to my brother Laban who is in Haran, and stay with him there until your brother's anger is appeased." Isaac also advised Jacob to go into Mesopotamia and take a wife there from among his kinsfolk. Jacob did as they counselled him and set out upon his long journey.

§ 12.

Jacob in Mesopotamia.

He had very far to go from Canaan to Mesopotamia. Night overtook him at a certain place in Canaan and he was obliged to sleep out on the ground with only a stone under his head for a pillow, and there he dreamt a wonderful dream. He saw before him a ladder standing upright; the top of it reached to Heaven, and angels were going up and down upon it. And

he heard the voice of God saying, "I am with you and will protect you wherever you go and bring you back at last to your own country." Then Jacob awoke, heartened by the prophetic dream. He took the stone he had slept on and set it up as a monument intending, when once he would set foot again upon his native soil, to build a temple upon the sacred spot. In after years a Hebrew city called Beth-El was founded there.

Jacob had been a great while on his way when at last he came to a field in the midst of which was a well where shepherds were sitting as they watched their flocks. The field was near Haran and the shepherds told Jacob that they knew his uncle Laban. Just as they were talking to him, Laban's younger daughter, Rachel, came into the field to water her sheep. The well was covered with a great stone, very heavy for the young shepherdess to roll away by herself, and when he learnt who she was Jacob rolled the stone away for her and watered her sheep. Then he told her that he was her cousin, kissed her and cried with joy at having found his people at last. Rachel hastened home and soon afterwards her father appeared. Laban welcomed his nephew and took him to his home where Jacob lived thenceforward.

Besides Rachel Laban had an elder daughter, Leah. Leah was afflicted with weak eyes,

but Rachel was very beautiful. Jacob fell in love with her and said to Laban: "I will serve you seven years if you will give me your younger daughter Rachel for my wife." Laban promised and Jacob served his uncle for seven years, minding his flocks by day and guarding them by night, working willingly for the sake of his beloved, and the seven years' labor seemed to him like the passing of a few days. But in the end, Laban cheated his nephew, for when the seven years were over he gave Jacob his elder daughter, Leah, for his wife instead of Rachel. "It is not our custom for the younger sister to be married before the elder," he said when Jacob complained, "serve me seven years longer and then I will give you Rachel also." So Jacob continued to serve him and thus obtained two wives. God sent many children to the unloved wife, six sons, whose names were Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar and Zebulun, and one daughter, Dinah. But to Rachel God sent no children at all and she was very unhappy. After a great many years, she at last bore a son who was named Joseph.

According to the eastern custom, Jacob took two more wives besides Leah and Rachel. Bilhah and Zilpah were their names, both slaves of the other two. Each bore two sons; Bilhah's sons were named Dan and Naphtali, and Zilpah's Gad and Asher.

Jacob had gathered a great household about him when he asked Laban's leave to go back to his own country, Canaan. But Laban was unwilling to part with him, for he was an excellent breeder of cattle and under his care Laban's flocks had multiplied. He begged Jacob to remain with him, promising him all kinds of favors if he would agree, and Jacob at last allowed himself to be persuaded. In return Laban gave him part of his flocks as a gift and in a few years' time Jacob possessed a great number of goats and sheep and camels, also many male and female slaves. Still Laban did not wish him to go away, so Jacob was forced to leave his uncle's home by stealth, taking with him his wives, his children, his slaves and his flocks. The fugitives had already crossed the river when Laban and his men overtook them. The uncle fell to reproaching the nephew for his secret flight, but Jacob answered that he had served him faithfully for twenty years and desired to return home with his family and his honestly-gotten possessions. After long argument they separated, piling up a great heap of stones on the far side of the Jordan as a border between their lands and they swore thenceforth not to molest one another in any way. Then Laban returned to Mesopotamia, and Jacob continued on his way towards Canaan.

§ 13.

Jacob and His Children in Canaan.

As he returned to his own country Jacob recollected that he would have to meet his brother Esau from whom he had fled so many years ago, and desiring to become reconciled with him he sent messengers on ahead to beg Esau, who lived on Mount Seir, to make peace with him. But the messenger soon returned saying that Esau was already on his way with four hundred men. This news struck terror into the heart of Jacob who began very fervently to beg God to save him. Then he divided all his men and flocks into two groups. The slaves, male and female, and the flocks, which he had intended as a present to Esau were placed in front and behind them stood the wives and children of Jacob with the rest of his people. As Esau drew near, Jacob went forward and bowed seven times to the ground before him. Esau, deeply touched by his brother's humility, embraced and kissed him, and they both wept, all their former enmity forgotten. At first Esau refused to accept his brother's gifts, but Jacob begged him so hard that finally he gave way. Then the brothers separated, Esau returning to Seir where he afterwards became the progenitor of the warlike Edomite tribes who dwelt in the

south of Canaan, and Jacob temporarily pitching his tents near the city of Sechem, in the middle section of the country.

A deplorable occurrence took place shortly after Jacob's advent to Canaan. The son of the King of Sechem, also named Sechem, kidnapped Jacob's daughter, Dinah, while she was taking a walk. The prince greatly desired to make her his wife but Jacob objected to her marrying a foreigner, so the young man kept her by force in his house. Then, Simeon and Levi, the brave sons of Jacob, armed their men and made a surprise attack on the city of Sechem, and, having slain the king and his son, set their sister free and took her back to her father's house. This event drew down upon the family of Jacob the surrounding tribes' enmity on account of which they were at last compelled to move farther south towards the later site of the city of Beth-El. This, it will be remembered, was built upon the spot where Jacob had slept after fleeing from Esau, and as he found himself there once more, he raised an altar to God, and ordered all his people to destroy the images of false gods which they had brought with them out of Mesopotamia, from the house of Laban, the heathen. According to the legend, God appeared again to Jacob, commanding him thereafter to call himself by the name of Israel. Pushing further on towards Hebron where the

aged Isaac still lived, Jacob made a halt on the road leading to the city of Bethlehem, and there a second son was born to Rachel, but she died. And Jacob buried the wife he loved and set a monument upon her grave. Then he made his way to Hebron, where his father Isaac lived, and there he stayed. He had not been there long when Isaac died in the hundred and eightieth year of his age. They buried him in the cave of Machpelah near Hebron, the family vault of Abraham, where Rebekah also lay. Jacob became then the elder and chief of the tribe.

§ 14.

Joseph and His Brothers.

Of all Jacob's twelve sons, Joseph, the son of Rachel, was the one he loved best. He gave him a coat of many colors to show he was his favorite, and this present excited the envy of Joseph's brothers; disliked by all of them he was for ever fanning their hatred and jealousy by careless words and actions. He had a dream one day and told his brothers about it. "I dreamt that we were all together in a field," he said, "binding sheaves. Then my sheaf stood up and your sheaves surrounded it and bowed before it." The brothers heard the story with great rage and said to him: "Do you suppose

you are ever going to rule over us?" And hated him worse than before. Another time Joseph told his father and brothers that he had dreamt that the sun, the moon and eleven stars were bowing before him. Then even the father scolded him saying, "Is it likely that your mother and your brothers and I will ever come to bow to the ground before you?"

One day when the brothers had taken their flocks to Sechem, Jacob sent Joseph to go and see whether all was well with them and their sheep. The brothers saw Joseph coming while he was still far off and said to each other: "Here comes the dreamer; let us kill him and throw him into a pit. Then we shall tell our father that some wild beast devoured him. Let us see how true his dreams will come then." But Reuben, the eldest, told his brothers that it would be wicked to kill Joseph, and advised throwing him into a pit alive instead. So when Joseph reached them, the brothers took off his many-colored coat, threw him into a pit in the field and sat down to eat. While they were having their meal, a caravan of Ishmaelite traders passed by, their camels laden with various merchandise. On the advice of his brother Judah, Joseph was sold to the Ishmaelites as a slave for twenty silver pieces. The bargain had been made in the absence of Reuben and when he returned and did not find Joseph in the pit, he

cried out in despair: "The boy is gone! Where shall I go now?" Then the brothers took Joseph's coat, dipped it in the blood of a kid and took to Jacob saying: "We found this in the fields; see whether it is not Joseph's coat!" Jacob recognized the coat and cried: "Yes, this is my son's coat! Some wild beast has torn him to pieces and devoured him!" The unhappy father rent his clothes in despair and mourned his son for many days, and when anyone tried to console him, he would say: "I cannot be consoled: I shall go down to my grave mourning for my son."

§ 15.

Joseph in Egypt.

The Ishmaelites took Joseph to Egypt and sold him into slavery there. He was bought by an Egyptian named Potiphar, chief of King Pharaoh's bodyguard. Joseph was honest and capable and pleased Potiphar greatly. He did not long remain a common slave but soon became the steward of Potiphar's house. Joseph's life in the house of the Egyptian chief might have been very happy but for his misfortune in gaining the favor not only of his master but of his master's wife as well. The handsome young steward pleased Potiphar's wife so greatly that she began to make

love to him, but the noblehearted Joseph refused to commit a dishonest action and deceive a kind master. One day, as Potiphar's wife pursued him with her advances, Joseph, unwilling to listen, fled out of the house, but his coat, by which she had been holding him, remained in her hands. Then, infuriated at being spurned, she began to scream to her servants for help, saying that the Hebrew slave had tried to attack her. When Potiphar heard the story he believed his wife and had Joseph thrown into prison.

Joseph remained in prison for a very long time and even there he astonished everybody by his great abilities and his noble character. The warden soon made him supervisor over all the other prisoners amongst whom were two officials of Pharaoh's court, convicted of some crime or another, one the king's chief butler, the other his chief baker. It happened that both these men were visited in sleep by disturbing dreams which they asked Joseph to interpret for them. When he had heard the dreams, Joseph told the butler that he would soon be released and the baker that he would soon be executed, and both predictions came true.

Two years later Pharaoh himself had a very strange dream. It seemed to him that seven fine fat cows came up out of a river and browsed over a meadow; then seven very thin cows came up out of the river and devoured the fat ones.

He also dreamt that seven full ears of corn in a field were eaten up by seven empty ears. Pharaoh awoke very troubled in his mind and summoned his priests and magicians to tell what the dreams meant, but none of them could discover. Then the king's butler, who had been released from prison, told how in the prison where he had been, there was a Hebrew named Joseph who was able to interpret dreams, so the king ordered Joseph to be brought to the court. When Joseph had been told of Pharaoh's visions he said: "The seven fat cows and seven full ears of corn mean seven years of good crops; and the seven lean cows and seven empty ears of corn mean seven years of famine. First there will be years of plenty in the land of Egypt with great abundance of grain, but those years will be followed by seven years of bad crops and there will be great famine in the land. Let Pharaoh appoint men to lay up vast stores of grain in his granaries during the years of plenty so that when the famine comes after, the people may be supplied from those stores and not starve." This wise reading of his dreams pleased Pharaoh so greatly that he said to Joseph: "Now I know that there is no wiser man than you in the land. Henceforth you shall rule over my household and my people shall obey you." And Pharaoh gave Joseph his ring, put a gold chain about his neck and

made him ride in his own chariot through the city, and when the new official drove through the streets, everybody bowed low before him.

Thus, from a wretched and unhappy prisoner Joseph became a ruler second only to the Pharaoh himself. He married Esenath, the daughter of an Egyptian priest, and she bore him two sons who were called Manasseh and Ephraim.

When the years of plenty came, as Joseph had prophesied, he stored away immense quantities of grain, and later on when the famine had come, he gave it out to the hungry people. There was so much grain in the king's granaries that even people from other countries came to Egypt to buy.

§ 16.

Joseph's Brothers in Egypt.

The great famine was not only in Egypt but in Canaan also, and when Jacob learnt that great stores of grain were in Egypt he sent his sons to buy what they could. Ten of them set out for Egypt, leaving only Benjamin, the youngest, behind with their father. In due time, the sons of Jacob came into Egypt and stood before Joseph who supervised the sale of the grain. Joseph recognized his brothers but they did not recognize him; the suspicion that this

haughty Egyptian ruler could be their longlost brother did not once enter their minds. Joseph gave no sign of having recognized them, however, but questioned them as to whence they had come and what was the object of their coming. The brothers told him that one of their brothers had been lost, and that another had stayed behind with their father in Canaan from which country they had come to buy grain. Joseph pretended not to believe them and said: "It is not true; you are spies and have come to make observations in our land." In vain the brothers assured him that they had no such evil intentions, but at last Joseph said: "If you are indeed honest men, bring your youngest brother also to me, and let one of you stay here as hostage." The brothers looked at one another and said: "Now we are punished for the wrong we once did to our brother Joseph. We saw him suffer, we heard his entreaties, yet we had no pity for him but sold him into slavery;" Thus they said, never dreaming that Joseph, whom they took for an Egyptian, could understand their language, and Joseph, when he heard them, turned away and wept. Then he commanded that his brothers' bags be filled with grain, and he put back into them the money they had brought with which to buy it. He detained one of the brothers, Simeon, as hostage and let the rest go home.

The brothers returned to Canaan and told Jacob all that had happened. And bitterly he answered: "It will be a sore bereavement to me: Joseph is lost, Simeon is left in Egypt and now you want to take Benjamin there also! No, I will not let him go!" But when all the grain they had brought from Egypt was exhausted, Jacob had no choice but to let Benjamin go with his brothers. The aged man blessed his sons on their departure and prayed to God to protect them from evil in the foreign land.

§ 17.

Jacob Migrates to Egypt.

When Jacob's sons arrived in Egypt for the second time, Joseph could no longer conceal his identity from his brothers and revealed himself to them, saying: "I am your brother Joseph whom you sold into slavery in Egypt." The brothers were too frightened to answer, but he quieted their alarm. "Do not grieve that you sold me," he said, "for God himself sent me here in order that I might preserve your lives. He has made me Pharaoh's advisor and ruler of all Egypt, so go you now quickly back to our father and bring him here with all his slaves and flocks so that you may all live with me in this country from this time on." Then Joseph embraced his brothers and kissed them, and they

all wept for joy. When Pharaoh heard that Joseph's brothers had come to Egypt, he ordered that beasts of burden and large wagons be given them in which to convey Jacob back with all his people and his goods.

The aged Jacob refused to believe his sons when they told him Joseph was alive, until, seeing the wagons he had sent, he cried out: "This is proof enough for me. My Joseph is living still and I shall go down and see him before I die."

Soon afterwards, Jacob left Canaan with his sons and their wives, his grandchildren, his servants, his flocks and his household goods, and went to live in Egypt, and his reunion with his long-mourned son touched all hearts. Joseph advised that Jacob and his people settle in Goshen, the most fertile part of Egypt, and upon Pharaoh's consenting, they did so. Once more the Hebrew settlers turned to their occupation of cattle-breeding in the fine Goshen pasturelands, and there they lived in peace apart from the Egyptians from whom they differed entirely in language and customs.

Jacob was one hundred and thirty years old when he went to live in Egypt, and he lived there for seventeen years. When he knew he was about to die, he blessed all his sons, also Ephraim and Menasseh, the sons of Joseph, and when he died Joseph and his brothers took

his body to Canaan to bury in the vault near Hebron where Abraham and Isaac rested, after which they returned to Egypt. Joseph lived to be one hundred and ten years of age and when his time came to die he desired his people to wait awhile before taking his remains to Canaan. So his body was embalmed, according to the Egyptian custom, to preserve it, and placed in a casket which was laid away in a tomb in Egypt.

§ 18.

Historic Corroboration of the Hebrew Legends.

That the Hebrews came of the Semite race that lived in ancient times in Babylonia, is proven by the striking similarity between the primitive Hebraic and Babylonian legends. Excavations of archaeologists in places where the Assyrian and Babylonian states once existed, have brought to light many monuments and earthen tablets inscribed with Assyro-Babylonian legends in a language greatly resembling Hebrew. These inscriptions of three or four thousand years ago tell of the creation of the world, the first man, the great flood and the splitting up of mankind into nations, all these legends being almost identical with those of the Bible. In Babylonian, as in Hebrew, mythology, heaven and earth were one limitless chaos

until the gods divided one from the other and created the world in seven days. An Assyro-Babylonian legend describes the flood in the same way as the Hebrew, but instead of Noah, a king named Xisutra is warned by the god Bel of the impending calamity and saved in a ship. The Hebrew story of the Tower of Babel and the division of languages corresponds to the Babylonian legend which relates how certain giants in rebellion against the gods, built a high tower in an attempt to reach heaven, but the gods overturned the tower upon the builders' heads, and ancient writings tell that the ruins of this gigantic tower existed in Bor, near Babylon.

There are very clear Biblical references to the connection between the Hebrews and the Babylonians in the story of the migration of the Semitic tribe of Terah from Ur in Babylonia to Aram. One group of the tribe remained in Aram and was absorbed by the Arameans, while another, known as Hebrews, went with their leader Abraham, to Canaan where they settled.

In Canaan began the subdivision of the Hebrew main tribe: first with the secession of the Moabites and Ammonites, two small groups living in the country beyond the Jordan to the east—this is the story of the separation of Lot's family from his uncle Abraham's, and the story of his sons, Moab and Ben-Ami.

After these there appeared in the desert surrounding the south of Canaan two more nomad groups, kinsmen of the Hebrews; these were the Ishmaelites and the Medianites, who, according to the legends, were descendants of Abraham's sons, Ishmael and Median. The southeastern section of Canaan was occupied by the Edomites, descendents of Esau, otherwise called Edom, (Abraham's grandson, according to the Biblical record). All these tribes of a common origin with the Hebrews were gradually absorbed by the natives of ancient Canaan, thus losing their special racial characteristics. One tribe only, direct descendants of Abraham through his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob, preserved their racial integrity and their tribal customs intact. They lived under the patriarchal system as one large family, the seniors being the chieftains of the tribe, and in the south of Canaan they plied their peaceable occupations as shepherds or tillers of the soil. At a certain period of indefinite date, this tribe, in consequence of a famine or of some other circumstance, emigrated to the neighboring Philistine dominions or to Egypt, but even in the midst of foreigners, they still preserved the customs of their fathers and held to their simple habits of life, though they formed alliances with the surrounding Canaanite tribes and

assisted them from time to time in their wars against alien invaders.

We learn from their legends, that the elders or Patriarchs of the Hebrews believed in one God, the Creator of heaven and earth, whom they called Elohim, and they built altars in many places upon which, on solemn occasions, they would offer up small cattle in His honor. Unlike the neighboring tribes, the Hebrews made no concrete images of their God, though household images would now and then be found amongst them, the custom of keeping these having been borrowed probably from allied tribes. Jacob's wife, Rachel, for instance, when she left her father Laban's home, took with her a few small household images, in the hope, no doubt, that they would protect her in her travels. The higher religious beliefs of the Hebrews were at that time in an incipient stage of development, but already the conception of a single Deity was beginning to stir in the minds of the more intelligent. Thus the religion of the Hebrews even at that early date, showed how it would diverge entirely from the other eastern religions.

After a long sojourn in southern Canaan, Hebrews of the tribe of Israel (or Jacob) began to move away to the nearest province of Egypt which country was separated from Canaan by a desert. The tribe of Joseph was

the first to go (this is the story of Joseph and his brothers) and they were followed by the other tribes that called themselves also "sons of Israel." With these migrations a new era opens in the history of the Hebrew people.

CHAPTER II.

The Israelites in Egypt.

§ 19.

Life in Egypt.

ANY years had passed since the tribe of the patriarch, Jacob (otherwise called Israel), had migrated from Canaan into the neighbouring land of Egypt, and this branch of the Hebrews, which had consisted in the beginning of a mere score of families, had eventually become very numerous. The men came to style themselves "sons of Israel" or Israelites, as a means of distinguishing themselves from kindred tribes descendants also of Abraham and Isaac, though not of Jacob.

The Israelites lived in Goshen, an eastern province of Egypt irrigated by a tributary of the Nile. They owned wide pasturelands for their flocks, and could roam freely over the whole country, but as time went on, many of them grew accustomed to a more stationary

mode of life and took to living in houses instead of in tents, and became in due course agriculturists and merchants. The Israelites increased with great rapidity; according to legend, the families of the twelve sons of Jacob numbered only seventy people at the time of their migration into Egypt, but very soon they had so greatly multiplied that each original group had split up again into lesser tribes each thousands strong.

The various tribes called themselves by the names of the sons of Jacob, their progenitors; the tribe of Reuben was the eldest of them all and even in Egypt did not change their occupation as shepherds; Joseph's group was the most numerous and split into two branches, one embracing the descendants of Ephraim and the other those of Manasseh (Joseph's two sons); the rest were the tribes of Simeon, of Levi, of Issachar, of Judah, of Zebulum, of Dan, of Asher of Gad, Naphtali and of Benjamin, each with its own elders and chieftains. Although there was no supreme chief over all the tribes, they remained nevertheless bound together by the ties of identical religious beliefs and of their common origin.

While not assimilating with the Egyptians, the Israelites were greatly influenced by their customs and manners. The Egyptians were the most enlightened nation of the ancient world;

their cities were rich and populous, they worshipped their gods in magnificent temples and their priests were men of learning. Their military enterprises took their armies into far distant lands. The toil of thousands of slaves raised the Pharaohs' great palaces, their pyramids and tombs. Even at that early period the Egyptians were familiar with many arts and useful sciences; they wrote, they solved the problem of irrigating their land and their civilization extended into many other fields, in all of which the Israelites became their willing pupils, some even going so far as to adopt their customs and social usages. Real friendship between the two races there could, however, be none; on the contrary it was inevitable that they should be and remain enemies, for the Egyptian religion with its worship of idols and animals was abhorrent to the Israelites holding fast to their belief in one God, and the Egyptians, on their side, regarded the aliens with contempt on account of their different religion and their foreign characteristics.

The more numerous the Israelites became, the stronger grew the Egyptians' hatred of them. From oppressing the Hebrews as foreigners, the Pharaohs and their officials passed to bearing themselves towards them as masters towards slaves, as though the Israelites were a people they had conquered.

§ 20.

Slavery in Egypt. The Birth of Moses.

Joseph had been dead for many years when a new king, with a deep hatred of the Hebrews, succeeded to the throne of Egypt. "Consider these Israelites," he said to his people. "They are very numerous now and soon might become stronger than ourselves. What if, in case of war with some other nation, they should join our enemies?" And in order to set a curb upon the growing power of the Israelites, the Egyptians made slaves of them. Under the Pharaohs' orders they were forced to do arduous work for the benefit of the state, digging ditches, building cities with royal palaces and monuments for the kings, doing the whole work unaided, even down to making their own bricks. Special overseers took care that the order of compulsory labor was sternly enforced, and in this manner two cities were built, Pithom and Ramses.

The harsh treatment they suffered did not prevent the Israelites from continuing to increase with great rapidity, and as the Egyptians saw this they were greatly enraged. At last the Pharoah issued an order commanding that thereafter every new-born Hebrew male child was to be drowned and only the girls allowed to live. The decree was mercilessly put into execution

and the Israelites saw themselves faced with total extinction.

In the midst of these calamities a son had been born to Amram, a member of the tribe of Levi. For three months the mother had kept the child hidden away lest the Egyptians should find and drown him, but the time came when she could do so no longer. Then she put the baby into a basket and carrying it down to the bank of the Nile she hid it amongst the rushes, bidding her daughter Miriam keep watch from a distance. It was the hour when Pharaoh's daughter and her maidens came to the river to bathe, and when the princess saw the basket in the rushes she caused her women to open it and there lay the little boy crying bitterly. Pharaoh's daughter took pity on the baby saying: "This must be a Hebrew child." Then Miriam approached and said: "May I go and fetch some Hebrew woman to nurse him?" The princess consented and the child's own mother came as nurse to her son. "Take this baby," said Pharaoh's daughter to the woman, "and look after him for me. I shall see that you are paid for it." Joyfully the mother took her baby and cared for him well. When the boy was old enough he was returned to the princess who brought him up as her own son, giving him the name of Moses which means "one taken out of the water."

§ 21.

The Youth of Moses and His Flight Into the Desert.

Although himself brought up in freedom, Moses did not forget the sufferings of his enslaved people, and it was with bitterness and indignation that he watched his brothers being oppressed, with exhausting labors and continual insults from the Egyptians. One day the young Moses went out to see them at their work and found one being beaten by an Egyptian overseer. Driven to fury at the sight of such cruelty, Moses fell upon the Egyptian and slew him, and seeing that nobody else had witnessed his deed, he buried the body in the sand. Pharaoh, however, soon learnt what had happened and would have punished the Hebrew youth had he not fled out of Egypt into the desert that stretched across the shores of the Red Sea between Egypt and Canaan.

Moses' wanderings in the desert brought him one day to a place where lived a tribe of nomad shepherds, the Midianites, kindred of the Hebrews. He stopped at a little distance from a well and watched seven maidens approach and fill troughs with water for their sheep to drink. They were the daughters of the Midian priest, Jethro. They had hardly finished filling the troughs when shepherds came and drove them

away from the well, but Moses hastened to their aid and helped them to water their flocks, and the maidens then went home and told their father that a stranger from Egypt had protected them from the rough shepherds. The Midian priest invited Moses to stay awhile at his home where the two very soon became great friends. Moses was happy living amongst these simple people and later became a member of their peaceful shepherd family when he married Zipporah, one of Jethro's daughters. But even there he did not cease to brood over the lot of his brothers in slavery under the Egyptians and was ever devising means by which they might be set free.

One day, tending his father-in-law's flocks, he strayed farther into the desert than usual and found himself at the foot of Mount Horeb (or Sinai). There he had a wonderful vision. He saw before him a dense thorn-bush all ablaze, and though it burned, the flames did not consume it. Then, from the midst of the burning bush a voice spoke to him. "Take off your shoes," it said, "for you are standing upon holy ground. I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I have seen the sorrows of My people in Egypt; I have heard their distress, and it is my will that they be released from their bondage in Egypt and taken into the land of Canaan which is a vast and

pleasant land, flowing with milk and honey. Go now from this place and I shall send you to Pharaoh that you may lead my people out of Egypt." Moses heard these words with awe and trembling, and he answered fearfully, saying: "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and set the Israelites free? And if I go to them and tell them that the God of our fathers sent me, they will ask, 'What is His name?' Then how shall I answer them?" And God said: "I am He who is eternal. Tell the children of Israel that Jehovah, the God of their forefathers sent you to them. Call the elders together and tell them that I am about to deliver My people from the yoke of Egypt and tell the king of Egypt that the God of the Hebrews commands he let them depart into the desert to worship there." Again Moses demurred, saying that his tongue lacked eloquence with which to move the Pharaoh with his words. But God promised to help him in his task and bade him work together with his brother Aaron. In deep perturbation, Moses returned to his father-in-law's house where he gathered together his wife and children and set forth on his return to Egypt.

§ 22.

Moses' Struggle for Freedom.

On the way, Moses fell in with his brother Aaron, and together they undertook the libera-

tion of their people. As soon as they arrived in Egypt they revealed to the Israelites the news of their approaching freedom, and the unhappy slaves, exhausted with the hardships they had suffered, received the tidings with unbounded joy. Moses and Aaron next sought the Pharaoh to whom they told the will of the Hebrew God, Jehovah, that all the Israelites be set at liberty forthwith, in order that they might serve Him in the desert. "And who is this Jehovah, that I should obey him?" asked the angry king. "By what right do you come here and interfere in the work of others? Leave them alone and look after your own affairs." And the result of the first visit was that Pharaoh's overseers were ordered to see to it that the Israelites worked harder than ever. Until then the Hebrew builders had been supplied with straw which they mixed with clay in making their bricks, but now they were made to go and gather the straw in the fields for themselves, though the same number of bricks had still to be made every day. The overseers hit on a new plan of choosing a few of the Israelites to assist in the work of superintending, and whenever the required output of bricks fell short, the helpers were flogged by the Egyptians. One day some of the helpers met Moses and Aaron and reproached them harshly for their meddling, saying that since they had only succeeded in arous-

ing Pharaoh's anger, they had put the Israelites in a worse plight than ever they had been before.

Then Moses, by God's command, decided to terrify the cruel king in obedience. The heathen Pharaoh must be made to see that the God of Israel was omnipotent, being able to deliver his people by miracles and also to punish their oppressor. Moses therefore went to Pharaoh and warned him that unless he allowed the Hebrews immediately to leave Egypt disaster would surely overtake the land. As the king took no notice of the warning, the prophecy of Moses proceeded to its fulfilment with a series of plagues. First the water of the Nile turned blood-red; it could not be used for drinking, all the fish died in it, polluting the air with the odor of their decaying bodies. Next, there appeared in the water and on the land countless swarms of frogs; they were everywhere, even overrunning the houses in such numbers that the people could no longer live in them. Pharaoh became freightened, and summoned Moses and Aaron to him and said: "Pray to your God to remove these frogs that plague my people and then I will let the Israelites go." But when they had done so and the frogs had disappeared, Pharaoh refused to make good his word. So God sent a third plague upon the Egyptians, this time a plague of lice which fas-

tened on animals and men and fed upon their flesh. "The hand of God is in this thing!" said Pharaoh's priests to him, but he remained obdurate and would not yield. Then clouds of locusts settled upon the fields and devoured all the crops; a murrain carried off the cattle; a terrible hailstorm followed, felling trees and killing men and beasts. A disease broke out amongst the Egyptians that covered their bodies with boils and abscesses, then such profound darkness fell upon the land that for three whole days the people could not see one another and dared not stir a foot. According to the legend, these plagues attacked only the Egyptians, all the Israelites being miraculously spared, and at each fresh outbreak the terrified Pharaoh would send for Moses and beg him to pray to God to lift the calamity from his people, promising in return to free the slaves. But no sooner would the trouble be over and past than the king would break the promises he had made. After the ninth plague, he at last consented to allow the Israelites to go into the desert on condition that they left their flocks behind. Haughtily Moses answered him saying: "Soon you will let us all go and even give us cattle to offer to our God." And lastly God sent the tenth plague, when the first-born son of every Egyptian died, even the first-born of Pharaoh himself—then and then only did the cruel heart of

the King relent. He sent at midnight for Moses and Aaron and implored them to take the Israelites away from Egypt as soon they could. All the other Egyptians too besought the Hebrews to leave. "Go, or we shall all perish!" they begged them. Thus it was that after long years of servitude, the Israelites at last regained their liberty.

§ 23.

The Departure From Egypt.

The Israelites hastily prepared their departure, and one spring morning, on the fifteenth day of the month of Nissan, they passed out of Egypt, six hundred thousand strong. A "mixed multitude of strangers" also went with them, and Moses walked at the head of his liberated people. So precipitate was their going that they found no time even to make bread for the journey, so they quickly baked the unfermented dough into unleavened loaves, and the Hebrews of later years inaugurated the custom of eating unleavened bread during the seven days of the Passover in commemoration of this event.

Once across the frontiers of Egypt, the Israelites directed their course towards the desert that lay between Canaan and the Pharaoh's land. For many days and nights they went forward in the wilderness, and the legend tells

how a pillar of cloud moved before them by day and a pillar of fire by night, showing them the way.

If the Israelites had kept along a straight course they would soon have reached the boundaries of their homeland, but Moses was afraid to follow too direct a route lest they should be attacked by the Canaanites of the south, for as yet the Israelites were unprepared for war. He therefore turned back and made a halt near the Red Sea straits on the Egyptian border where stood the temple of Baal-Zephon, the Egyptian desert god.

Meanwhile the Egyptians, having buried all their first-born sons who had fallen victim to the plague, began to regret the loss of their Israelitish slaves, and when Pharaoh learnt that they had turned back in the direction of the sea, he believed that Baal-Zephon had barred their way across the desert and caused them to go astray. With a great army and many horses and chariots, he set out in pursuit of the Hebrews in order to force them to return to Egypt.

He overtook them near the sea and when they saw the enemy hosts advancing upon them, the Israelites were terrified. Many of them reproached Moses for the oncoming peril, saying "Why did you not leave us in Egypt? Were there not graves enough in the land there that

we should be brought into the desert to perish?" But Moses tried to console the cowardly ones. "Have no fear!" he said. "Even today you shall see by what miracles God can help His people; you see the Egyptians for the last time today!" And a miracle did happen, just as he said, for as the Israelites arrived at the shore of the Red Sea a fierce easterly gale was blowing over the narrow straits; the wind beat back the water until the sea-bed was almost visible and the Israelites were able to cross to the opposite side as though over dry land. But when the Egyptians tried to follow them, the wind had dropped and the water rushed back, submerging the whole army, horses, chariots and all.

Great were the rejoicings of the Israelites when at last they saw themselves free from their enemies. On the safe side of the Red Sea they sang songs of victory, praising God and Moses, his messenger, and Moses' sister, Miriam, took a timbrel in her hands, with which to accompany her song. Other women with timbrels came also, singing and dancing, and this was what they sang: "Sing to Jehovah, for He has triumphed! He has cast the rider and his horse into the sea!" Their hearts were glad that the long years of their slavery were over at last and that they were about to return once more to Canaan, the land of their ancestors.

§ 24.

Historical Corroboration of the Legends.

According to the Bible, the Israelites lived in Egypt for some four hundred and thirty years, but the researches of scientists have not yet precisely established the actual date of their settlement or of their final exodus; they have, however, been able to place many events of that period by comparison with the Egyptian history of the time.

The ruling dynasties in Egypt were of short duration, the political power being seized now by one, now by another military leader, whose family would keep it as long as they could until they in turn were ousted. During the XVIIth dynasty (about 2000 B. C.) a considerable portion of Egypt was conquered by nomadic tribes of Semites, called in the Egyptian inscriptions, Shasu, and by the Greek writers of a later period, Hyksos. For three or four centuries these Hyksos ruled in Egypt, establishing there a dynasty of shepherds, and it was during the reign of one of their kings, apparently, that the Israelites first migrated into Egypt. The reign of the Hyksos king was contemporary with that of the Pharaoh whose steward Joseph was and who allowed Jacob and his people to settle in the province of Goshen. About 1600 B. C.

the foreign "dynasty of shepherds" was deposed, and the powerful Pharaohs once more governed the entire country. The hatred the Egyptians had felt for their former alien rulers was visited upon all other Semitic shepherd tribes, more especially upon the newcomers to Goshen, and this feeling was responsible for their ultimate enslavement, for the "new King" who, according to the Bible, most harshly oppressed them, is thought to have been a member of the re-established dynasty. Upon regaining power, the Pharaohs at once set millions of slaves to work, building cities, magnificent temples, monuments and pyramids, and the Israelites of Goshen were not exempt from the law compelling them to labor for the kings like the rest of their subjects.

Of the two cities built by the toil of the Israelites, the second was called after the XIXth Dynasty of the Pharoahs, both named Rameses. During the reign of Rameses II (about 1300 B. C.), famous for his great conquests and the magnificence of the palaces he built, the Israelites drank the cup of oppression to the dregs, and it was not until the reign of Menephta I, his successor, under whom the Egyptian power, weakened by slave-rebellions within the kingdom and by foreign invasions from without, began to decline, that the Israelites were able to throw off the tyrants' yoke.

Then, turning their backs forever upon the land of their long bondage, they went into the adjacent desert where kindred tribes of Semites lived the life of nomads. Thus, according to the calculations of the Egyptologists, the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt must have taken place about 1200-1300 B. C.; that is, some 3100-3200 years ago.

Moses, greatest of the sons of Israel, was the hero of the struggle. He was a member of the priestly tribe of Levi whose relations with the Egyptians the records show to have been closer than those of any of the other Israelitish tribes. The insult offered both to his race and his religion in the enslavement of his people so outraged Moses' feelings that he left the land of bondage and went to live in the desert near Mount Horeb (or Sinai) where a branch of Cenites, called Midianites, lived, and he married a daughter of the tribal priest. There are grounds for supposing that the religion of the Cenites bore a close resemblance to the monotheistic beliefs of Israel, Jehovah being their common God and Sinai the holy mountain where they worshipped. Moses, greatly encouraged by his meeting with allies in the desert, took heart and

returned to Egypt where he brought fresh hope to his people, and later, taking advantage of a temporary weakness of the Egyptian government, he was able to lead them away into the desert, where they made for the desert settlement of the Cenites which was near the mountain of Sinai.

CHAPTER III

The Israelites in the Desert

§ 25.

From the Red Sea to Sinai.

OSES led the Israelites from the shores of the Red Sea into the desert of Shur, where they suffered greatly from thirst in the sandy waste. When at last they did come to a place where water was, they found it too brackish to drink, and at once began to murmur against Moses as they had done before. But the leader threw a stick into the pool and the water became sweet. In time they reached an oasis with springs and palm-trees. This green spot was called Elim and beyond it lay the desert of Sin. Wandering through this desert the Israelites soon felt the pangs of hunger, and again they fell to reproaching Moses and Aaron, saying: "In Egypt we sat by the flesh-pots and had bread in plenty; now you have brought us into this desert to starve to death." Next morning they awoke to find all the ground about their encampment covered with something white in the form of

minute grains, sticky to the touch.* "There is the food which God has sent you," said Moses to the people. "You are to gather it every morning, one measure for each person, and on the sixth day, you shall gather a double measure in order that you may have enough for the Sabbath." The Israelites fell upon the white grains and called them manna. They baked the manna into bread and made it into potage as well. Every morning it appeared afresh and towards noon it melted and vanished in the heat of the sun. Throughout their wanderings in the desert it sustained them.

Soon the Israelites reached a mountainous country called Pephidim, where a fierce nomadic tribe, the Amalekites, attacked them. Moses met their onslaught with a detachment of his men under the leadership of his young disciple and lieutenant, Joshua-ben-Nun, who repulsed the desert bandits, and the Israelites, feeling themselves safe once more, went on their way. Some time afterwards, they came to the desert of Sinai (the Sinai Peninsula) and encamped near the sacred mountain of Horeb (called also Sinai, after the peninsula on which it stands), where God had once revealed Himself to Moses in the burning bush,

*In cetrain parts of the Arabian desert, a gum like honey-drops from the bushes on to the ground, and this the Arabs gather and eat.

and on whose slopes the Midianites amongst whom Moses had spent his youth, were living still.

When Jethro, the Midian priest, learnt of the arrival of his son-in-law, he hastened out to welcome him, overjoyed that the Israelites had at last regained their liberty. Jethro went to live in the camp of the Israelites where he soon found that Moses was busying himself night and day with the affairs of his people, helping them with advice and settling their disputes. And Jethro said to Moses: "You do wrong to try and look after these people all by yourself; that is good neither for you nor for them. It is my advice that you choose from amongst them a few wise and honest men and appoint each one chief over a certain group; set one to govern a thousand, another a hundred, another even only ten, but each should have complete control over his own group and appeal to you only in matters of very grave importance." Moses liked this sagacious advice and did as his father-in-law suggested.

§ 26.

The Revelation on Sinai.

Two months had passed since the exodus from Egypt, and the Israelites, freemen once more, were marching towards Canaan to begin life there as an independent nation. But before

arriving in the country which they meant to inhabit all together, it was necessary for the various tribes to establish some sort of common social code by which to preserve their unity. Although, throughout their long sojourn amidst the Egyptians, the Israelites had preserved their original belief in a single Deity and followed certain customs inherited from the patriarchs of old, they had no clear conception of God or of a true faith, nor did they possess any definite social or ethical system. Having lived so many years in Egypt, some of them had even adopted heathen customs so that the time had come when it was essential for their leaders to show them whereof the true faith consisted and according to what laws it was desirable to live. This great task of unification was accomplished by Moses at the foot of Mount Sinai.

When the Israelites had pitched their tents at a little distance from the mountain, Moses called them together and said to them: "You saw what Jehovah did to the Egyptians. Now He has borne you away as on the wings of an eagle and brought you to Himself. If you will obey Him and keep His commandments you will be dearer to Him than any other people upon the earth. Yours will be a kingdom of priests and you will be a holy people." When the Israelites heard these words, they cried out: "All that God tells us to do, that we will do."

Then Moses gave the Israelites two days in which to make their bodies and their raiment clean and fit for the reception of the great event. On the morning of the third day, Moses led the Israelites out of their camp and assembled them about the foot of the mountain, but he forbade them to ascend its slopes. Since early morning dense clouds had obscured the peak; thunder rolled and in the flashes of lightning, its summit, enveloped in flames and smoke, was momentarily illumined. Alone Moses began the ascent and as he neared the top, a mighty voice resounded from the midst of the storm, and the watchers below heard the following words in which the great commandments of the Hebrew religion were given to them:

1. I am Jehovah, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage.

2. You shall have no other gods but Me. Neither make for yourselves any image or likeness of things that are in heaven or upon earth or in the water, nor shall you bow down to them.

3. You shall not take the name of Jehovah, your God, in vain.

4. Remember the day of the Sabbath; six days you shall work and on the seventh day rest, you and your children, the servants of your household and your beasts of burden.

5. Honor your father and your mother that

you may live long upon the earth which Jehovah has given you.

6. You shall not kill.

7. You shall not commit adultery.

8. You shall not steal.

9. You shall not bear false witness against any man.

10. You shall not covet anything that belongs to another, neither his wife, nor his servant, nor his house, nor his ass, nor his ox.

The people standing at the foot of the mountain listened in awe to the utterance of these divine commandments in which the ideals of faith and justice and kindness were given forth, and when the voice ceased to speak they returned to their tents. But Moses remained upon the mountain for forty days and forty nights, and God explained to him there many other laws determining the life and conduct of each Israelite in the family and in the community. That these precepts received on Sinai might be forever perpetuated, Moses inscribed the ten principal commandments upon two stone tablets which he told the people to keep sacred, and later on all the other laws were collected and kept in a book called the Book of Union (Sepher-ha-brith).

§ 27.

The Golden Calf.

The great truths proclaimed from Mount Sinai were not at once fully understood by all the Israelites, amongst whom were many ignorant men whose minds had not yet developed beyond the worship of idols and the other false beliefs they had learned in Egypt. These clamored for an image in the likeness of the God of Israel, such as the heathens made of their gods, that eyes could see and hands feel, and the longer Moses remained on the mountain, the more insistently they demanded of Aaron that he make them an image of God in the shape of a calf, like Apis, the sacred bull of the Egyptians. Aaron found himself at last compelled to do as they urged him, and they brought their golden ornaments to him to be melted down and cast into the desired form. When the image was made, they danced about it shouting: "This is our God who led us out of the land of Egypt." They built an altar before the idol and offered up cattle upon it, making merry, drinking and playing the while.

Moses, meanwhile, after a forty days' absence upon the holy mountain was on his way back to the Israelite camp, carrying the stone tablets on which he had carved the ten commandments.

The sound of many voices came to him from a great distance and when he reached the camp and saw the people dancing round the golden calf, he flew into a great rage. There he was, bringing his people the teachings of the true God and that was how he found them, dancing about a graven image, an idol! In his wrath, Moses flung the tablets down upon the ground and smashed them into fragments. Then he seized the golden calf and threw it into the fire, crying out: "Whoever is for God, let him come with me!" And all the members of the tribe of Levi joined him, for they had not been corrupted by the worship of idols. Whereupon the armed Levites attacked the heathen worshippers of the golden calf and slew a great many of them.

Moses' anger against the Israelites for the crime they had committed was very long in abating, but at last, seeing them all repentant, his heart softened towards them and he prayed God to forgive their sin. Once more, under the divine inspiration, he inscribed the ten commandments of Sinai upon fresh tablets and at the foot of the mountain they built a new altar of twelve rough stones to represent the twelve tribes of Israel. As Moses once more ascended the mountain carrying with him the tablets he had carved anew, his face so shone with joy that at last the Israelites were filled with rever-

ence for their great leader and believed that God spoke to them through him.

§ 28.

The Tabernacle and the Camp of Israel.

While in the desert of Sinai, Moses commanded the Israelites to construct a portable tent which should serve as a temple in which the people might worship God in their wanderings. They set to work with much rejoicing, each one bringing whatever materials he could for the building, wood, metal, various fabrics, skins, and so forth. The work was accomplished under the supervision of two men who had learnt the builder's art in Egypt, Bezalel and Aholiab, and it was speedily done. At the extreme end of the interior stood the Ark, ornamented with winged images of cherubim, which contained the people's most sacred possession, the stone tablets bearing the ten commandments. The tabernacle was surrounded by a court in the center of which an altar had been raised, and the whole was called "the tent of the congregation." Aaron and his sons were appointed priests of the temple and other Levites were their attendants; each holder of holy office wore special garments to distinguish him from the ordinary members of the tribes. The tent of the congregation was in the center of the Israelite

camp which was laid out on a military plan, for they were then preparing their invasion of Canaan.

Moses made military duty compulsory for every able-bodied man over twenty, exempting only the Levites who were all attached to the temple. There were twelve other tribes, the descendants of Joseph having divided into two, the tribes of Ephraim and of Manasseh, and all lived in tents surrounding the tabernacle. Closest to it were the tents of the Levites, to which tribe Moses, Aaron, all the priests and temple attendants belonged, and the tents of the other twelve were arranged all round the Levite circle, three on each side, every three forming a separate division with its own banner, though each separate tribe had its individual chief. Whenever they had to make a fresh start on their way, the priests would blow their horns and all the divisions would begin to move in the order in which they were standing; the Levites, carrying the tabernacle with the Ark, walking in the centre, surrounded by the four divisions with their banners. A division of Midianites under the leadership of Hobab, a brother of Moses' wife, had joined forces with the Israelites, and rendered them great service, for Hobab knew the desert roads well and was an excellent guide.

§ 29.

The Scouts; the Rebellion of Korah.

For almost a year the Israelites remained in the desert of Sinai, and it was not until they had celebrated their second Passover after the exodus from Egypt that they actually set forth to enter Canaan. Several marches brought them as far as the oasis of Kadesh near the border of southern Canaan where they encamped. The time was approaching when they were to take possession of their destined country, and from Kadesh they sent twelve men, one out of each tribe, into Canaan to reconnoitre the land and find out what they could about its soil, its vegetation and inhabitants. One of these scouts was Joshua, the son of Nun, of the tribe of Ephraim, and another was Caleb, the son of Jehunnet, of the tribe of Judah. The scouts traversed the entire country of Canaan from south to north making themselves familiar with its characteristics. Near Hebron they gathered various fruits of rare size which they took with them to show their people. After an absence of forty days they returned to the camp in Kadesh and made the following report:

"We have been over the whole country from end to end. Its soil is excellent, since here are the fruits it bears, but the people are powerful

nations whose cities are large and well fortified. The men we saw there were giants beside whom we looked like flies."

All the scouts except Joshua and Caleb declared that there was no hope of conquering Canaan, and their reports were received by the Israelites with deep dismay. Many wept and some of the more timid, who had reconciled themselves in the past to their slavery, even clamored to return to Egypt. Joshua and Caleb, tried, however, to console the people. "God in His kindness," they said, "may bring us into this land and put it into our possession, even though the inhabitants be far stronger than ourselves. We need not fear them!" But the crowd, in its excitement, would not listen to the two bold men, would, in fact, have stoned them for their words. Seeing them thus, Moses was greatly troubled in his mind, for at last he realized that with a people whom ages of slavery in Egypt had turned into cowards, he would never be able to conquer Canaan. He must needs wait, therefore, until a new and free-born generation had grown to military age. So he told the Israelites that they would remain another forty years in the desert until no more would be left of those who had been in Egypt, and that their braver sons, trained for the purpose of conquest, would enter the promised land in their stead. Then he ordered them to march

forward into the vast desert that lay along the shores of the Red Sea.

Moses' decision did not please the people and some of the men, more daring than the rest, disobeyed him and left the camp, going straight back towards the mountains, but the fierce Amalekites came down from their uplands and dispersed them. The failure of their enterprise brought most of the Israelites to submission, but there still remained some who were secretly aggrieved that the leader's power should go uncontrolled, and their dissatisfaction led to the rebellion of Korah when two hundred and fifty important members of the tribes, led by Korah, a Levite, and two Reubenites, Dathan and Abiram, rose against the authority of Moses and Aaron. "It is time your rule came to an end," they protested. "We are all holy; why, therefore, do you place yourselves above the rest of us?" They blamed Moses for having brought them out of Egypt but not into Canaan, and declared that now they would all perish in the desert. A great crowd gathered about the rebels' tents and the revolt seemed likely to spread. In the name of God, Moses ordered the people away from the tents, and no sooner had they fallen back than a miracle occurred; the earth where Korah and his followers stood, fell in, and all the rebels, their tents and everything they possessed, were swallowed

up. Many of the Israelites who had sympathized in the revolt, perished of a plague.

§ 30.
Life in Kadesh.

For about forty years after the return of their scouts, the Hebrews continued to live in the desert. Some settled in the oasis of Kadesh while others wandered over the surrounding plains bordering the south of Canaan. They lived in tents and occupied themselves with cattle-breeding and agriculture. As a reminder of those years in the desert, the Hebrews of a later period established the custom of building tents or "succoth" for the seven days of the autumn festivals. As time went by, the older people who had been taken by Moses out of Egypt gradually died, leaving behind them a new generation whom Moses was able to train in the true spirit of freedom and the fear of God. Moses had appointed a council of seventy elders to assist him in governing the Israelites; and Aaron, the High Priest, together with the other Levites who served in the "tent of the congregation," also helped in the work of teaching and spiritual guidance.

When the time set by Moses for living in the desert was drawing to its term, the Israelites had moved nearer to the Canaanite border, where, in the south and east, lived the warlike

Edomites, Moabites and Amorites. At first Moses decided to attempt peaceful means of getting the Israelites into the country; he sent messengers, therefore, to the king of Edom and bade them say as follows: "Thus speaks your brother Israel: let us pass into your country. We shall not set foot in your fields nor in your vineyards, nor shall we drink any of the water in your wells. We shall keep to the highway until we have left your frontiers." But the king of Edom refused this friendly request and the Israelites made another detour in the desert. Aaron died on the way, near the mountain of Hor, and his son Eleazar became the High Priest. His sister Miriam had died before in Kadesh.

§ 31.

The Conquest of Transjordania.

Leaving the land of the Edomites behind them, the Israelites stopped near the Moabites' country in the south east of Canaan. A considerable portion of this territory had recently been conquered by the mighty Amorite king, Sihon, whose dominions extended along the entire eastern bank of the Jordan. Moses sent messengers to Sihon asking him to allow the Israelites to pass but he too refused and marched out against Moses with a great army. The Israelites fought so valorously that the Amorites were

badly defeated; then the Israelites entered the country and occupied Heshbon, the capital. Encouraged by their first success, they pushed farther northward, into Bashan, famous for its fine pasturelands, and there they were met by Og, the king of Bashan, a descendant of the ancient giants. But Og and his army were defeated also and the Hebrews entered into possession of the fertile country, thus gaining a firm footing in Transjordania, the eastern section of Canaan.

When Balak, the Moabite king, saw the Israelites encamped near his borders, he was in great alarm lest they seize his lands as they had done the others'. He therefore sent the elders of his tribe into Mesopotamia to fetch a sorcerer who lived there. When Balaam, as the sorcerer was called, came before Balak, the king said: "There is a people which has come out of Egypt and occupied all the country round my kingdom; we cannot make war upon them for they are stronger than we. Go then and lay a curse upon them, that we may vanquish them and perchance drive them out of Canaan, for I know that fortune comes to those whom you bless, and misfortune to those whom you curse." Balaam agreed to do as Balak wished, but God appeared to him as he slept and turned him from his purpose, so that when the king of Moab led him to a mountain-top from which he could

survey the Israelites' encampment, Balaam said: "How should I curse those whom God has not cursed, or be angry with those against whom God is not angry?" And when the sorcerer beheld the camp a second time, he was so enchanted with the spectacle that he cried involuntarily: "How beautiful are your tents, O Jacob, and your dwellings, O Israel!" In vain Balak urged him to curse the Israelites; Balaam only blessed them instead and foretold a great future for them; then the Moabite king turned upon him in anger, and Balaam was forced to go back where he had come from. Thus the plot against the Israelites was frustrated.

§ 32.

The Division of Transjordania. Death of Moses.

When Transjordania was completely in their hands, the Israelites made ready to cross the Jordan and conquer western Canaan. Then members of the shepherd tribes of Reuben and Gad came to Moses and said: "The land we conquered is very good for pastures and we have great numbers of cattle. Let us have this land for our own and do not take us across the Jordan." Moses reproached the men for wishing to break away from the rest of the people to stay peacefully behind, living upon the safe land instead of doing their share in further conquests in the west. But the Reubenites and Gadites

explained that that had never been their intention. "All we wish to do here is to build folds for our sheep and dwellings for our wives and children," they said, "and as for ourselves we are ready to take up arms and fight in the foremost ranks of the Israelites, and not return to our homes until all the people have entered into their dominions across the Jordan." Then Moses ordered that the land of the Amorites and Bashanites be considered thenceforth as belonging to the tribes of Reuben and Gad. Later, half the tribes of Menassah joined them and occupied a section of the Amorite country known as Gilead.

Thus two and a half tribes settled in the east, and the rest had yet to cross the river before they could gain possession of the interior and apportion it out. But Moses was not destined to finish the task he had begun; the great liberator and leader of Israel felt his end approaching and knew he would never lead his people into the Promised Land. In his last days, he would often call the Israelites together and teach them how to live in their new country according to the principles of justice and freedom, and he appointed his assistant Joshua to be their leader in his stead. The sad hour of parting came at last and Moses predicted the future of the people as a whole, then blessed each tribe separately. When this was done, he

climbed to the top of Mount Nebo, a peak in the Pisgah range, whence he could see almost all over the country; there he stood for a long time contemplating the view spread out below him, and his heart was full of grief that he should not have been allowed to enter the future kingdom of Israel. Soon afterwards he died, in the one hundred and twentieth year of his age. They buried him upon the plain of Moab, in an unmarked grave. The Israelites mourned the death of their great leader for thirty days. "And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses," says the Bible. He had been not only the liberator of his people, but also their spiritual leader, creating a nation out of a multitude of slaves, and by his teachings making them the "chosen" people of the earth.

§ 33.

Historical Corroboration.

According to the legends, four decades elapsed between the exodus from the "land of bondage" and the entrance into the "promised land" of Canaan, and throughout the interim the Israelites wandered in the desert. Their life there falls into two periods; the brief sojourn in the vicinity of Sinai, and the longer one in the oasis of Kadesh, near Edom and the southern border of Canaan.

The Israelites reached Sinai during the first days of their freedom when the national spirit was freshly aflame, and under the influence of this new ardor they felt the necessity of effecting some close connection between the various tribes whereby they might become welded into a great community with a definite social system. Filled with hope and noble aspirations, they followed where their leader led, but the sudden change of environment could not but have its effect upon them. Straight from the green banks of the Nile, they now found themselves in a bleak and arid desert, where bare rocks, like giants, reared their heads into the clouds. To the wanderers it seemed as though the dividing line between earth and heaven, between life and death, had been effaced, and that only the spirit of the Creator ranged abroad. In Egypt the burden that had lain upon them, though hard indeed to bear, had been at least a burden of human oppression, but here, in the vast desert void of men, a weight of another kind oppressed them, that of the presence of a supreme power, an eternal Being, the one God. At the foot of "God's mountain" (Har ha'Elohim), called Sinai, the people first heard the immortal commandments which became the cornerstone of the Jewish faith.

This marked the beginning of the transition

from the vague "natural" religion of the patriarchs, to the clearly defined "social" religion taught by Moses, in which God appears as the Master, not only of nature, but of human life as well; not only the God of the universe but especially the God of Israel, Jehovah is His name. "I am Jehovah, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage," as the first commandment ran. Further the divine attributes are stated: He is one and incorporeal, therefore polytheism and idolatry has to be forbidden—second commandment. The Sabbath rest is ordered as a means of preserving the health of the body and the freedom of the spirit—fourth commandment. Respect for parents is made the basis of family and social life, for the power of the people is seen to lie in the strength of the ties between the older generations and the younger—fifth commandment. The laws against lying, theft, murder, adultery and covetousness, (third, sixth, seventh and tenth commandments), make a foundation on which to build a social and moral order. Such were the eternal truths revealed to all mankind through the Hebrew people.

During the sojourn in Kadesh the Israelites learnt how to live in an organized society. According to the legend, Moses ruled with the aid of a council of elders, and chiefs were given

charge of certain groups in which they had to maintain order and settle all ordinary disputes. Some of the social laws mentioned in the "Book of Union" (chapters XXI-XXIII, Exodus) were originally made to deal with situations arising out of such group-disputes, and this book formed the nucleus of the Mosaic code. Humanity, compassion for the weak and the poor, severity towards those who infringe upon the rights of others—these are the principles governing those laws, which hold that all are equal before God, man and woman, rich and poor, master and slave. The following are a few of the Mosaic precepts. "If you buy a Hebrew slave, let him serve for six years; set him free the seventh year without compensation, and if he has a wife, let his wife go with him." "You shall not oppress widows and orphans." "If you lend money to a poor man, taking his garment as security, return it to him every day at sundown, for he needs it to cover himself at night." "Do not try a poor man unjustly." "Do not take bribes." "Do not oppress a stranger, for you were strangers yourselves in the land of Egypt."

The foundations of the ancient religious rites were also laid in Kadesh. The most sacred object they possessed was the "Ark of Union" in which the stone tablets bearing the ten commandments were kept. While the people were

stationary in the desert the Ark was kept in the tabernacle, but when they went forth into battle, the Levites walked at the head of the army, carrying the Ark as a token that Jehovah himself was leading his people. And as they marched they called: "Arise, Jehovah, and let thine enemies be dispersed." The presence of the holy Ark in their midst, inspired the Israelitish warriors to the deeds of courage by which they obtained the brilliant victories that paved their way into eastern Canaan. That series of holy wars is called in the Bible, "The Wars of Jehovah" (Milchamoth Jahve).

CHAPTER IV

The Conquest of Canaan (About 13th Century B. C.)

§ 34.

The Country and Its Inhabitants.

HE land which the Israelites were destined to conquer after the death of Moses, was known by a succession of different names; the Hebrews changed its name of Canaan which they had originally given it, to The Land of Israel; later on the Greeks and Romans called it Palestine and lastly the Christian peoples gave it the name of The Holy Land. A long strip of land, bounded by the Mediterranean on the west, by the Arabian desert on the east and south and by Syria (or Aram) on the north, it lay at the extreme west of the Asian continent, between the great kingdoms of Assyria and Babylonia and of Egypt in northern Africa.

Along the northern border of Canaan are two mountain ranges, Lebanon and Hermon, from whose peaks, covered in perpetual snows, rushing torrents descend and together form Can-

aan's principal river, the Jordan. The course of this river is like a ribbon stretched in a straight line from north to south, and passing through the two lakes of Merom and Kineret, it flows out into the Dead Sea, thus dividing the whole country in two, east and west. The eastern section is called Transjordania or Gilead, and the western is Canaan proper. In ancient times the former was famous for its meadows and pasturelands, the latter for the fertility of its soil on which olives, grapes and other fruits, and grain grew abundantly. Lesser mountain chains, branches of Lebanon and Hebron, follow the course of the Jordan north and south, and are called in the eastern section The Mountains of Gilead. The western chain was called in Biblical times, Naphtali, Ephraim and Judea. In the Naphtali range two peaks are famous, Mount Tabor and Mount Carmel, between which lies the beautiful valley of Ezdrelon. The chain of Ephraim adjoins Naphtali at the south with Mount Herisim, rising above the city of Sichem. As they approach the seashore, the mountains gradually decrease in height until they become the plain of Sharon. The chain of Judea with Mount Zion and the Mount of Olives rises between Jerusalem and Hebron.

Both the climate and the physical characteristics of Canaan are very varied. In the mountain

regions cool winds keep the atmosphere clear and pure throughout the greater part of the year, but in the lowlands tropical heat prevails in the summer months. Kineret, a fresh water lake, has an abundance of fish, and vines, date-palms and other fruit-trees flourish on its shores. The water of the Dead Sea, on the other hand, with its salt and other mineral components, is such that no fish can live in it; its shores are a bleak and arid wilderness with but an occasional oasis here and there. The shallow lakes and streams of Canaan dry up during the hot season but when the rains set in, they swell and overflow their banks, inundating the surrounding soil which they thus render fertile. Few countries on earth can rival Canaan for natural beauty together with variety of climate and vegetation.

It was inevitable that the special characteristics of the country should have their effect upon the character and mentality of the Hebrew conquerors: the mildness of the climate encouraged physical labor, and the beauty of the scenery appealed to their religious and poetic emotions; there, unlike in other countries of the East, Nature neither enervated man nor tended to brutalize him through excessive physical exertion.

In the remote period when the Israelites were preparing to take possession of Canaan, its bor-

ders were inhabited by several small but powerful tribes. The warlike Hittites had the northwest, between the mountains of Lebanon and the Mediterranean from which section they were later crowded out by the industrious Phoenicians. A tribe very closely resembling the Israelites in racial character and language lived in the northeast; they were the Arameans, and other kindred tribes, the Amorites, the Moabites and the Edomites were in the east and in the south. The wild, nomad Amalekites held the southeastern confines of the country and beyond their lands, the seacoast was occupied by the Israelites' warrior neighbours, the Philistines.

The interior of Canaan, west of the Jordan, consisted of many small kingdoms each inhabited by different tribes though all were known as Canaanites. A kingdom generally comprised one city and the fields and pastures adjoining it. No permanent alliance bound these kingdoms together for defense in case of an invasion by an enemy tribe, in fact all the kings were usually at war with each other, so that when the news reached them that the Israelites in their numbers were approaching out of the desert after having conquered the powerful kingdoms of Og and Sihon, the Canaanites of the interior were greatly alarmed. They had made no preparations for withstanding an invasion on so great a scale and the result was that

at the end of a long and bloody war they were compelled to give up the greater part of their country to the united forces of the Israelites who looked upon the land as their heritage from their ancestors.

§ 35.

Crossing of the Jordan and the Fall of Jericho.

Upon the death of Moses, Joshua, son of Nun, the new leader of the Israelites, moved towards the Jordan at the head of all the tribes. Before crossing the river himself he sent scouts in advance to reconnoitre the city of Jericho and the country about it. The scouts returned with news that the people of Jericho and its suburbs had already learnt of the Israelite victories beyond the Jordan and were living in great dread on account of the tales they had heard. Then Joshua and his followers crossed the river where it was shallowest, the priests walking ahead carrying the Ark of Jehovah, and behind them the Israelites in their numbers. They forded the river and encamped upon the western bank, near the city of Gilgal. These occurrences took place in the spring, in the very month of Nissan when the Hebrews had left Egypt so many years ago, and now in Gilgal they celebrated the Passover holidays.

Jericho, towards which they proceeded from Gilgal, was a strongly fortified city and difficult

to capture. For six days the Israelites marched round its walls in serried ranks, the holy Ark borne before them and the priests blowing their horns; then, on the seventh day, part of the fortifying walls collapsed while the troops were still marching, and with loud blasts from their horns and triumphant shouting, the Israelites entered the city. The conquerors killed all the inhabitants of Jericho, burned their houses and destroyed their property, all but the vessels of gold and silver and other metals which they took for the portable temple, "the tent of the congregation."

When the people of Gibeon and its neighbor-cities learnt that the Israelites were planning to destroy all the Canaanites, they invented a ruse by which to save themselves. They went into the Israelite camp, clad in old and tattered garments, and said to the leaders: "We have come from a distant country, where we heard of your victories, and we wish to become your allies." Joshua and the elders believed their story, and promised to spare their lives as they were not inhabitants of Canaan. But it was very soon discovered that they were Hittite impostors who had come from nearby cities, but when the Israelites took their cities, they kept the promise they had given and spared the people's lives. As a punishment for their deceit, however, Joshua made slaves of them, forcing them to

perform menial duties such as chopping wood and carrying water for the Israelites.

§ 36.

The Conquest of Southern and Northern Canaan.

Meanwhile the kings of five cities of southern Canaan, Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lashish and Egdon, hearing that the neighboring city of Gibeon had voluntarily surrendered to the Israelites, concluded an alliance amongst themselves and declared war upon the Gibeonites. The latter implored the help of Joshua who was then in camp at Gilgal, and immediately the Israelite leader took his troops into battle against the allied kings. He fell upon them suddenly and defeated them with great slaughter near Gibeon, following the routed armies for a great distance as they fled. An ancient folk-song tells how Joshua, wishing to end the fighting before sunset, exclaimed: "Sun, stand still over Gibeon; and thou, moon, over the valley of Ajalon!" And the sun stood still and the moon stayed until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. And as the Canaanites were fleeing down the hillsides, a terrible hail-storm broke, in which many who had escaped the sword, were killed by the great falling stones. The allied kings were taken prisoner and afterwards hanged by Joshua's orders;

Israelites succeeded to their territories which were situated in the mountainous southern section of Canaan.

News of these victories was not long in reaching the kings of northern Canaan, the most powerful of whom was Jabin, King of Hazor, and he entered into an alliance with his neighbors for mutual protection against the redoubtable invaders. They gathered together an immense army, and many horses and chariots, and pitched their camp upon the shores of Lake Meron. But their vast numbers did not dismay the brave Israelite leader, who led picked troops against them and routed them utterly, even pursuing them down to the very seacoast, burning their chariots and killing their horses. Then they razed Jabin's capital, Hazor, to the ground, annihilated the inhabitants and captured an enormous quantity of booty. Thus after a series of wars covering a period of many years, the Israelites became masters over the greater part of Canaan, from the Lebanon mountains in the north to the Dead Sea in the south. Many strongly-fortified towns still remained unoccupied by them, more especially in the north.

§ 37.

The Partition of Canaan.

When they had gained possession of most of the country, the Israelites held a council to allot

to each tribe its share. The tribes of Reuben and Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh had received theirs while Moses was still living; they had the rich pasturelands of Bashan and Gilead on the eastern bank of the Jordan. All western Canaan therefore remained to be divided among the other nine and a half tribes, and to the most powerful of these, the Ephraimites and the Judeans, fell the largest shares. The former, whose leader was Joshua, occupied the middle part of Canaan between the Jordan and the Mediterranean, and built their capital, Sechem, in the midst of their territory. To the northwest, as far as the foot of Mount Carmel, lay the possessions of the other half of the tribe of Manasseh. The Judeans had the southern country below Jerusalem (Jerusalem proper and Mount Zion belonged until the time of King David, to the Jebusites, a Canaanite tribe), and a section of their land was reserved for the small tribe of Simeon. This was a rocky strip of country at the southwestern extremity of Canaan, on the borders of the desert where the wandering Amalekites lived.

The two tribes of Benjamin and Dan found a home also between the territories of the Ephraimites and the Judeans, the former occupying the province where stood the cities of Gilgal and Jericho, (the scenes of the first Israelite conquest after the crossing of the Jor-

dan); and the latter tribe settled farther west near the Philistine coast of the Mediterranean where was the city of Jaffa. The north was settled by four other tribes; the Issachar group, who were agriculturists, receiving the fertile valley of Jezreel with Mount Tabor and Mount Gilboa; the Zebulunites the land near the seaboard of Phoenicia where as time went on they adopted the same occupations as the Phoenicians and became a merchant people. Further north, still along the Phoenician seacoast, lay the possessions of the tribe of Asher. The tribe of Naphtali occupied the northeastern section of Canaan about the lakes of Meron and Kineret. Only the tribe of Levi, consisting all of priests and men of learning, received no land of their own, but forty-eight cities in the dominions of the various tribes were assigned to them to live in, for as God's priests and the spiritual leaders of all the people, their dwelling was to be in every part of the country equally.

After the division of Canaan had been duly accomplished, their leader Joshua went to live with his own tribe, the Ephraimites, which, as the most numerous, dominated all the others. To them belonged the privilege of keeping the people's most sacred possession, the portable tabernacle which contained the Ark of Jehovah and which was carried at the head of their armies whenever they went into battle. Upon the par-

tition of Canaan the Tabernacle was kept by the Ephraimites in their city of Shiloh where for a long time it remained with the altar on which it stood, and pilgrims from every part of Canaan would go to Shiloh where the priests and Levites conducted the holy services at the shrine. In Shiloh also the High Priest made his permanent residence, and during Joshua's lifetime that office was held in succession by the son and grandson of Aaron, whose names were Eleazar and Phineas.

When Joshua had grown old, he called together the priests and elders of all the tribes and when they had assembled in the City of Shiloh the aged leader spoke to them, reminding them of the great events of their past history, of the Egyptian slavery and the exodus out of the Pharaoh's land, of the wanderings in the desert. "And now," he said, "God has given you land which you did not till, cities which you did not build yet in which you may live; vineyards and olive-groves which you did not plant, yet of whose fruit you eat. Reverence therefore your God and serve Him sincerely, casting out the other gods which your ancestors served long ago in the countries beyond the river (the Euphrates) and in Egypt; and serve your God alone." And the people cried: "We will serve Jehovah, Jehovah, our God, whose commandments we shall obey." Then Joshua took a

great stone which he set underneath an oak in Sechem to commemorate the oath taken there by the people to observe the laws of God. And soon afterwards he died, being one hundred and ten years old.

§ 38.

Historical Corroboration.

The discoveries of scientists in modern times have thrown some light upon the international status of Canaan during the period of the Israelitish conquests. As late as 1887, when excavations were being made at Tel-el-Amarna in Egypt, a great many clay tablets were found bearing inscriptions, which, when deciphered, turned out to be letters of certain petty Palestinian rulers addressed to the Pharaohs of Egypt. These letters, dating from the XVth and XIVth centuries B. C. show that at that time the Kings of Canaan recognized the sovereignty of the Pharaohs, for they contain assurances of loyalty and often beg for help against hostile neighbors or the invasions of nomad tribes. One of these small kings, Abdi-Hiba of Jerusalem, describes the invasion of Canaan by a wandering tribe called the "Habiri" which threatened to seize the entire country, and complains of having received no help against them from Egypt. These "Habiri," as various data prove, were the Hebrews, and another

inscription of a later date, tells of the war of a Pharaoh against the Israelites in Palestine.

These relics revive echoes of the period of the great migration to Canaan which took place between the XVth and the XIVth centuries B. C. During that period, the power of Egypt fluctuated and finally weakened into nothing, and in Canaan the tribes were continually at war with each other, the larger ones, (such as the Hittites and the Amorites mentioned in the Egyptian inscriptions), trying to establish their dominion over the smaller. At the same time, the country was suffering the invasions of the nomad "Habiri" out of the desert, a tribe which included not only the Israelites but also Moabites and Edomites, other kindred groups belonging to the Hebrew branch of the Semitic people.

The Israelites, however, gradually separated from the rest and accomplished the conquest of Canaan independently, assisted greatly by the internal hostility of the petty Canaanite kings. The conquest, however, was effected by very slow degrees, the Israelites occupying at first only certain parts of the country; elsewhere they lived side by side with the natives. The Israelites, like their neighbors, split up into lesser groups or tribes which only much later were united again into a single nation.

CHAPTER V

The Period of Judges. (XII to XI Centuries, B. C.)

§ 39.

Historical Review.

THE Israelites, on entering Canaan, were united in a common purpose, the conquest of the country, and all the tribes fought side by side under the leadership of Joshua. Province after province fell into their hands, and at the beginning of the period of Judges they had conquered the greater part of the country and duly divided it among the various tribes. The shepherd groups had returned to their own lands across the Jordan and the rest were engaged in establishing order within their respective territories.

When Joshua died, no one was found worthy to succeed him as Patriarch of the whole nation, and with the disappearance of the central authority, the once-united tribes had fallen apart into independent groups, each, within its own boundaries, forming a kind of separate small

kingdom. The disruption of the Israelites' unity was greatly to the advantage of the various border tribes about Canaan, as also of those native Canaanites who, only partially conquered during Joshua's lifetime, had remained in their own cities in the midst of the Israelites' settlements. Arameans, Moabites and Amorites from the borders harassed the newcomers in turn, making repeated and successful attacks upon settlement after settlement, and exacting heavy tribute. In this way the Israelites would fall into subjection until some elder, goaded into revolt, would assemble an army and win back freedom for his own group. In the peaceful interval between ridding themselves of the yoke of one alien tribe and suffering invasion from another, the heroic leaders went by the name of Judges. A Judge's control often extended over several allied tribes, but none ever rose to power over the whole people as Joshua had done. No sooner, indeed, did a Judge die than the tribes that had come together under his rule, immediately separated, to fall victim once more to the attack of invaders until the next liberator arose to set them free. This state of things persisted for two centuries. The Biblical record of this period tells how in those days "there was no king of Israel; everyone did as he pleased." Neither political nor religious unity bound the people together. Their belief in a single Deity

and in the Mosaic laws was not so solidly established in their minds that they could remain unaffected by the religions and customs of the heathen tribes surrounding them, and intermarriage with the natives became very common, in spite of the prohibitions of the ancient tribal law. In their close contact with alien peoples the Israelites came to adopt many heathen customs and practice many heathen ceremonies.

In addition to their own God, Jehovah, they worshipped the various Canaanite deities as well, the "Baals" presiding over certain places, building altars on hilltops where they brought offerings to the idols, and in their houses they kept little images of gods, called teraphim, to be protectors of their hearths. The temple of Jehovah in Shiloh was all but deserted except for a few of the most pious.

At that period the Hebrew nation was in its earliest infancy, and consequently still prone to the same childish beliefs as have existed among all other nations at the dawn of their history. In spite of their many and frequent lapses, however, they were never in danger of complete assimilation, for the stories of their glorious past, of the great and wise Patriarchs, their freedom from slavery in Egypt, the revelations on Sinai, were still fresh in their memories. Handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation, the records of that past gave the people

courage with which to face every disaster that might befall them. The priests and Levites attached to the temple at Shiloh became the keepers of the old religious traditions, and they took care that the faith that had descended to them from their forefathers, however heavily it might be overlaid with paganism, should never be allowed to disappear. They contrived, therefore, to keep alive the old teachings of the Hebrew religion which was, however, not to attain to its fullest development until a far later period.

§ 40.

The First Judges.

The people of Israel, exhausted by the long wars they had fought under Joshua, longed for peace, but in vain. For the warlike border tribes harried them with raids continually, beginning with the conquest of the north by the Syrians who oppressed them for eight years. Eventually Othniel, an elder of the tribe of Judah, rose in revolt and with a handful of men drove out the Aramean soldiers who had been placed on guard in the conquered Israelitish cities. The success of this rebellion brought the Israelites in great numbers under the banners of the Judean hero who then followed his first victory with an invasion of Syria at the head of a great army, and there he defeated the Arameans and slew their king. The tribes which Othniel had thus set

free, acclaimed him as their "Judge" or ruler.

The rule of Othniel did no more than establish a temporary order, for no sooner had he died than anarchy and lawlessness reigned again. Numerous Judean tribes living within the protection of the mountains, fortified themselves in those fastnesses and broke entirely away from the rest.

Seeing the unity of the Israelites once more disintegrated, the surrounding foreign tribes recommenced their attacks. This time the Moabites from eastern Transjordania crossed the river and seized Jericho as well as other possessions of the tribe of Benjamin. The Benjaminites endured their vassalage for a long time, paying tribute to Eglon, the cruel king of the Moabites, until there appeared one day in their midst a brave warrier, Judge Ehud, who, by a deed of great heroism, set his people free. He went to visit King Eglon under pretext of taking him gifts from the Israelites, and when he found himself alone with the tyrant he killed him. This done, he assembled a large army and not only annihilated the Moabites in Jericho, but drove them out of all the other Israelitish territory they had conquered.

§ 41.

Deborah, the Prophetess.

While the warlike southern tribes of Judah

and Benjamin had been securing themselves against their enemies, the tribes of Naphtali, Zebulun, Issachar and Asher were struggling against similar trouble in the north. Joshua had never completely conquered the northern region of Canaan, and many of the native communities still lived in fortified cities of their own, surrounded by cities of the Israelites. These small local tribes hated the newcomers who had taken most of their lands from them and seized every opportunity of avenging themselves. King Jabin, the ruler over several of the tribes, cruelly harassed the people of Naphtali and Zebulum for many years, and Sisera, his general, with a large army at his back, equipped with many chariots of iron, kept the whole Israelite population in a state of terror, causing many to seek refuge from his incursions in the land occupied by the Ephraimites.

While these events were taking place, there lived in the mountains of Ephraim a wise woman named Deborah. The people regarded her as a prophetess, that is, a woman whose pronouncements were inspired by direct communion with God. They sought her advice in times of trouble and her judgments in their disputes. And from her seat under the shade of a palm-tree, Deborah would teach them and dispense justice to all who consulted her. When the refugees from the north told her how their

kinsmen were suffering at the hands of the cruel Sisera, Deborah appealed to the Israelites to rise against the enemy. She summoned Barak, a warrior of the tribe of Naphtali, and bade him, as the leader of the troops of Israel, give battle to the invaders. "I will go," Barak answered, "if you come with me." "I will go with you, if you wish," said the prophetess, "but you will gain little glory if I do, for the people will say that it was a woman's victory, and not yours."

Barak marshalled an army of ten thousand men from amongst the members of the tribes of Naphtali, Zebulun and others, and marched in the direction of Mount Tabor. When news was brought to the formidable Sisera of the Israelites' preparations for war, he set out to meet the approaching army with all his mounted soldiery, and the encounter took place by the river Kishon near Mount Carmel. Sisera's troops with their heavy chariots found themselves greatly hampered in that hilly country, and were powerless against the agile Israelites, whose onslaught from all directions at once they were totally unable to cope with. Utterly defeated, Sisera was forced to flee on foot and hide in the tent of Jael, the wife of a Kenite chief. But the Kenites were friends of the Israelites, though Sisera was ignorant of this. Jael pretended to welcome the Canaanite general and

gave him milk to drink before he rested. But as soon as he slept she plucked one of the sharp tentpoles out of the ground and drove it with a hammer into his brain, killing him instantly. With these victories, the north also at last expelled its enemies and regained its freedom. The Song of Deborah, which is preserved in the Bible, gives a vivid picture of the people's state of mind during this period of struggle for independence.

"Awake, awake, Deborah; awake, awake, utter a song; arise, Barak and lead thy captive, thou son of Abinoam. Out of Ephraim was there a root of them against Amelek; after thee, Benjamin, among thy people; and the princes of Issachar were with Deborah, even Issachar and also Barak. The Kings came and fought; then fought the Kings of Canaan by the waters of Megiddo. They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. Blessed above women shall Jael be; blessed shall she be above women in the tent. He asked water, and she gave him milk; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish. She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workmen's hammer, and with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote off his head, when she had pierced and stricken through his temples. At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down; where he bowed, there he fell down dead. The mother of Sisera

looked out at a window, and cried through the lattice, Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the wheels of his chariots? Her wise ladies answered her, yea she returned answer to herself. Have they not sped? Have they not divided the prey? . . . So let all thine enemies perish O Lord; but let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might."

§ 42.

Gideon.

After several decades of peace, trouble again befell the Israelites. Wandering borderland tribes began to invade the country and plunder the inhabitants. Midianite nomads on the east and half-savage Amalekites on the south "came as grasshoppers for multitude" into the land of Israel. At the harvest time they swarmed over the land upon their camels, pitching their tents in the farmers' villages. Wherever they passed they destroyed the grain in the fields, seized the cattle and robbed the peaceful villagers. The Israelites, as they hid all they could from the plunderers in caves and mountain passes, were greatly downcast at the recommencement of all their former misery.

There lived at that time in the city of Ophrah in the western part of the land of Manasseh, a man named Gideon who,

though but a simple peasant, had the courage of a great warrior. When his elder brothers were killed by the Midianites, Gideon determined to avenge their murder and set his people free. One night, the legend tells, as he was threshing his wheat in secret, the better to hide it from the Midianite bandits, a messenger of God came to him and said: "Go and save the Israelites from the Midianites. It is God's will that you do so." With the inspiration of this message, Gideon began his appointed task by tearing down the altar which had been raised to Baal by his own father, Joash, and building on the same site another to Jehovah. Then the Baal-worshippers of Ophrah said to the father of Gideon: "Put your son to death, for he has destroyed the altar of our God." But Joash answered: "Must you take Baal's part? Does he need you to save him? If he is a god let him save himself and punish the destroyer of his altar."

Thereupon Gideon appealed to the people to rally to the defence of their country and thousands of warriors from the tribes of Manasseh, Zebulum, Asher and Naphtali responded to his summons. The Midianite hordes were encamped in the valley of Jezreel and laying waste all the country round. Gideon decided to attack them unawares, and before going into battle he told his men that all who were cowards and afraid

might return home. At that, his army melted away and only a band of three hundred remained. At night the heroes set out with trumpets and flaming torches hidden inside pitchers. They fell upon the sleeping enemy, throwing the burning torches in amongst them, then sounded their trumpets, shouting: "Draw sword now for God and Gideon!" The Midianites, startled out of sleep and filled with alarm at the sound of the trumpets and the glare of the torches, fled in disorder, with the Israelites in pursuit. When he had defeated the main body of the enemy, Gideon sent messengers requesting all the tribes to take prisoner every fugitive Midianite that came their way. Then the powerful tribe of the Ephraimites entered the war and captured the Midianite leaders. But it was not enough for Gideon to drive the enemy out of the land of Israel; he crossed the Jordan into their own territory where he captured Zalmunna and Zebah, two Midianite princes, whom he caused to be executed as the murderers of his brothers several years earlier.

This brilliant victory made the name of Gideon famous among the people of Israel, and they began to realize how powerful they might become if only they might always have such men to lead them in their wars and govern them in times of peace. The representatives of the principal tribes made Gideon their Judge and

tried to persuade him to accept the title of King of Israel for himself and his heirs. But the modest general answered: "Neither I nor child of mine shall rule you. God is your ruler."

§ 43.

Gideon died at a very great age, leaving many sons, the offspring of his many marriages. One of them, Abimelech, whose mother had been a slave from Sechem, was a very ambitious man, and coveted the throne which his father had refused. In order that he might become king over all the Israelites, he gathered his followers together and with their aid killed all his brothers except the youngest, Jotham, who managed to escape. Then the inhabitants of Sechem proclaimed Abimelech their king, and when Jotham learned what had happened, he climbed Mount Gerizim, and, addressing the people from the hilltop, related a beautiful parable in which he compared the noble Gideon who had rejected the title of king to the covetous Abimelech who had obtained it through murder and crime.

"The trees of the forest," said Jotham, "went to find a king and they said to the olive tree: 'Come and reign over us.' And the olive tree answered: 'Shall I cease to give oil and go to reign over trees?' Then the trees said to the fig tree: 'Come and reign over us.' And the fig tree answered: 'Shall I cease to bear my sweet

and juicy fruit and go and reign over trees?' Then the trees said to the vine: 'Come and reign over us.' And the vine answered: 'Shall I cease to yield my juice that delights God and men and go to reign over trees?' Then the trees said to the bramble. 'Come and reign over us.' And the bramble said: 'If you truly want me to reign over you, come and stay in my shade, and if not, then fire shall come out of the brambles and devour the cedars of Lebanon.'"

The reign of the cruel Abimelech was short, for within three years the people of Sechem, grown weary of his misrule, had risen in revolt and banished him. Civil war then broke out as Abimelech attacked the rebels near Sechem and defeated them. And re-entering his own city as though he had been a victorious foreign invader, he destroyed it and slew all the inhabitants except some thousands who had sought shelter in a fortified tower, but Abimelech set fire to the tower and all the refugees perished in the flames. Then his troops besieged the city of Thebez, where a tower had also provided a refuge for fugitives, but this time, as the king approached its walls, a woman standing on the top threw down a fragment of stone which fell upon his head and broke his skull. Calling his armor-bearer to him the dying king said: "Take your sword and kill me so that none may say that I was killed by a

woman." The armor-bearer obeyed and thus died Abimelech. Thus also failed the first attempt to establish a kingdom amongst the independent Israelite tribes unused to autocracy.

§ 44.

Jephthah.

The shepherd tribes on the eastern bank of the Jordan, particularly those of Gilead, were continually at odds with the neighboring tribe of Ammonites. This tribe, which had once owned all Gilead looked upon the Israelites as intruders and tried to regain the lands they had lost in the various defeats they had suffered during the reign of Sihon, King of the Amorites. There came a time when the Ammonites had become so strong that not only did they harry the Israelites of Gilead, but boldly crossed the Jordan and attacked even the interior. Then the elders of Gilead held counsel together and decided to make war on the enemy. They chose for their leader the brave Jephthah, stepson of a man of Gilead. His half-brothers had driven him out of his father's house and refused to give him his rightful inheritance, and embittered by the wrongs he had suffered, Jephthah had fled to the neighboring plains and become the leader of a band of robbers. When the Ammonites began to attack the Israelites the elders of Gilead came to Jeph-

thah and said to him: "Come and be our leader in the war against the Ammonites." But Jephthah answered: "Why did you let my brothers drive me out of my father's house? And why, now, should you come to me because you are in trouble?" Finally yielding, however, to the elders' entreaties, he consented to become leader of the Israelite troops, and first sent messengers to the king of the Ammonites requesting him to withdraw his armies from Gilead. The King sent back the answer that the land had belonged to the Ammonites before the Israelites had come out of Egypt to occupy it and was theirs still. Thereupon Jephthah declared war, and with his valiant troops attacked the Ammonites, defeating them completely. He drove them out of Gilead and they never dared molest the Israelites again. The victorious Jephthah returned in triumph to Mizpeh-Gilead, his native city where he was acclaimed chief or Judge by his tribe.

The folk-lore of the period tells a terrible and tragic story of how Jephthah, being about to descend upon the enemy, made a vow to God that if He would deliver the enemy into his hands, he would sacrifice on his return home, the first living creature he met coming out of his house. The war ended, Jephthah returned in triumph to his city and the first living creature he saw as he entered, was the beautiful

maiden, his only daughter, coming joyously with a tambourine to meet her victorious father. Jephthah, remembering his vow at the sight of her, exclaimed in despair: "Alas, my daughter; you bow me down with grief, for I have vowed to sacrifice to Jehovah the first living thing I should meet on my homecoming, and I may not break that vow." "Father," answered the maiden, "if that was the promise you made to Jehovah, you must do with me as you said you would, since He took vengeance on your enemies in return for your vow. One thing only I ask of you, to give me two months, and I will go into the mountains and together with my friends there lament my maidenhood." Jephthah allowed her to depart and for two months the girl remained in the mountains lamenting over her young life so soon to be cut off. At the end of the appointed time she returned to her father and he "did with her according to his vow." It became a custom thereafter among the Israelitish maidens to go into the mountains for four days every year to mourn the daughter of Jephthah.

§ 45.

Samson, the Man of Strength.

Soon a formidable new enemy began to attack the Israelites; these were the Philistines who inhabited the south-west of Canaan, where they had built their cities, Goza, Ashkelon and

others upon the sea-coast. The Israelitish tribe of Dan, their nearest neighbours, suffered greatly from the raids of this warlike people whom they were not strong enough to resist. Legends exist which tell of the career of a certain Israelite, a man of stupendous physical strength who tried, single-handed, to avenge his enslaved brethren. His name was Samson and he belonged to the tribe of Dan. According to the wish of his pious parents, Samson had been declared a "Nazarite" in his early childhood that is, one dedicated to the service of God, and his hair, as was the custom for Nazarites, was always left uncut. From his youngest days, his strength had been a matter of wonder to all who saw him. When he grew up, he chose a bride from amongst the Philistine maidens, and one day as he was on his way to see her in the town where she lived, he encountered a young lion in his path. Just as the animal made a leap at him, Samson caught it and tore it in two with his bare hands, as though it had been a lamb. Very soon the enemies of his people too had cause to reckon with his strength, for once he killed thirty Philistines in Ashkelon and another time, having caught three hundred foxes, he tied blazing torches to their tails and turned them loose in the Philistines' fields at harvest time so that all the ripe grain was burned. Then Samson fled to the mountains,

and the enraged Philistines raided the neighboring land belonging to the Judeans and demanded that Samson be surrendered to them to pay for his misdeeds. The Judeans, in great distress, went to Samson and said: "What is this that you have done? Do you not know that the Philistines are our masters? Now we shall have to bind you and deliver you into their hands." They bound his wrists with stout ropes and led him out of the mountain pass whither he had fled into hiding. Just as the Philistines approached to seize him, however, he summoned all his force, burst his bonds and was gone. Finding himself unarmed in his flight, he picked up an ass's jawbone on the road and with it slew every Philistine he met. Some time later he was passing a night in Gaza and the people, hearing of his presence there, locked the city gates, intending to capture him early the next morning. But at midnight Samson awoke, and when he found the gates locked, he tore them out, pillars, bolts and all, and carried them away on his shoulders to the top of the mountain.

The marvellous exploits of Samson made him famous among the Israelites and several tribes elected him as their Judge. But the Philistines continued to devise means by which they might bring about his downfall. At last they learned that Samson was in love with a Philistine

woman, named Delilah, and forthwith their chiefs went to her and said: "Find out wherein lies the great strength of Samson and by what means it may be taken from him, and we will give you eleven hundred shekels of silver." Delilah then began to beg Samson to tell her the secret of his strength, and, unable to withstand her entreaties, he confided to her that it lay in his long hair that had never been cut, and that if ever he should lose his hair, his strength would be lost too. This Delilah reported to the Philistine chiefs and one night she gave Samson a sleeping-draught and while he lay helpless, she cut off his hair. As he had told her, his strength was gone with his long locks and the Philistines captured him without difficulty. They put out his eyes and flung him, chained, into prison in Gaza where they put him to work at the treadmill, grinding their grain.

The hero of the Israelites remained a prisoner for a long time, but gradually his hair grew again and with it his strength began to return. One day the Philistine princes made a great feast in the temple of their god Dagon, and ordered that Samson be brought to them that they might make merry over his fallen glory. The blind man was led into their temple which was filled with worshippers, and as they bandied

their jests back and forth, he stood praying silently to God. "O Lord," he begged, "do not forget me utterly, but give me back my strength for one moment more, that I may be avenged for what my enemies have done to me." And all at once, he felt all his ancient power flow into him anew. He pressed his mighty arms against the two centre pillars that supported the temple's roof and cried aloud: "Let me die, O Lord, with the Philistines!" The pillars tottered and gave way, and the great building collapsed, crushing to death the thousands of Philistines and Samson among them. The hero's relatives extricated his body from the ruins and buried it in his family vault in the land of the Danites.

§ 46.

Life and Customs of the Israelites.

In the period of the Judges, the Israelites, in their social system and customs, differed very little from the other inhabitants of Canaan. Some of them were farmers, others cattle-breeders; industry and commerce were as yet undeveloped among them. Wherever they came into contact with other tribes, either in Canaan proper or upon its borders, they adopted the local customs as they found them and even the local forms of worship as well. The majority of the Hebrews were unable to accustom themselves to the idea of worshipping an invisible God and

often made images of Jehovah before which they prayed and sacrificed. Even Gideon, the hero who had destroyed the altar of Baal, had such an image cast in gold which he placed in his house, inviting the people to gather there and worship the idol of the true God.

Even the priests of Jehovah often held services before images as in the story of Micah, the Ephraimite, who had in his own house a temple containing one large silver effigy and many smaller ones. A young Levite was invited to conduct the services and to this self-appointed priest the credulous would come and beg to have their future predicted in the name of the oracle. This was at the time when some of the Danites who had been forced by the Philistines out of their territory, were searching for a tract of free land where they might settle, and to this end, they had sent five scouts ahead to reconnoitre a certain country to the northward. The scouts, on their way there, stopped at the temple of Micah to consult the oracle as to whether they would bring their errand to a satisfactory conclusion or not; they were told that they would find what they had been sent to look for, and the prophecy came true when the Danites conquered the city of Laish, north of the Phoenician border. Then the Danites stole the oracle-image from Micah and carried it off into their new land as a sacred

possession, building a temple in which to house it. Similar private temples were to be found among other Israelite tribes and only a very few of the most pious still frequented the temple of Jehovah in Shiloh. Thus there was no longer any bond uniting the various tribes of Israel since they had lost their religious center as well, indeed, not only had the former ties weakened, but actual feuds now began to complete the work of disintegration.

As the result of one of their fierce fratricidal wars, the entire tribe of Benjamin only just escaped annihilation. A traveling Levite and his wife had put up overnight in the Benjamite city of Gibeah, and certain evil and depraved men broke into the house where the couple were, carried off the wife and outraged her. The next morning, the Levite found her lying dead in the doorway. He took a knife and cut up her body into twelve pieces, sending a piece to a city of each of the twelve tribes of Israel that they might all know of the crime that had been committed by the inhabitants of Gibeah. The people were stirred to great wrath and made ready to punish the offenders. Troops from all the tribes, especially the Ephraimites, entered the land of the Benjamites and demanded that the criminals be delivered to them for due retribution. But the Benjamites refused to give them up. Then the Israelites

vowed that their daughters should marry no men of the tribe of Benjamin and so avenge the blood the offending tribe had shed. There ensued a bitter struggle in which the Benjamites were at first victorious on account of their skill with the bow, but they could not long hold out against the superior numbers of the other tribes united against them. Thousands of Benjamites were slain and their cities burned to the ground.

The conquering tribes assembled in Bethel after the wars, were moved to pity for the Benjamites' fate. "Is it right that a whole tribe should disappear from among the people of Israel?" they asked, and tried to devise some means of helping the survivors. So many of the Benjamite maidens had met death in the wars that there were not enough left for even the few surviving soldiers to marry, and they could not take wives from the other tribes on account of the vow the men had taken forbidding their daughters to marry members of the guilty tribe. That vow could not be broken, but the elders now said to the Benjamite youths: "There is a holiday feast in Shiloh every year. Go there and hide in the vineyards, and when you see the city maidens come out to dance, leave your ambush, and let each one take the maid he likes and return with her to his own country." This the Benjamites did; they surprised the maidens of Shiloh and after marrying them, took them back into their

own land. Thus the tribe of Benjamin was saved from extinction without any breaking of vows, for in fact the other Israelites had not given their daughters to the Benjamites, since they were carried forcibly away.

§ 47.

Eli, the Priest.

The worthier Israelites did their best to keep the rest staunch to the true faith and the good Mosaic law, and tried to prevent intermarriage with the heathen. One of these earnest teachers was Eli, who came of a family of priests and was himself a high priest in the temple of Shiloh. For forty years he ruled over the tribes of central Canaan, most powerful of which were the Ephraimites. As high priest in Shiloh, Eli exercised considerable influence over the pilgrims who visited the temple from all parts of the land and he tried to instill into them the belief in one God and the hatred of idolatry. On occasion he would give them his blessing in their struggles against their enemies, more especially against the Philistines, against whom the Israelites were for some time fairly successful, preventing them at least from making any fresh conquests. But when old age had forced Eli to retire in favor of his two sons, matters took a turn for the worse. Hophni and Phineas, as they were called, had not inherited their father's fine qualities. So far from fulfill-

ing their duty towards the people as their High Priests, they concerned themselves only with collecting all the offerings they possibly could from the worshippers, giving themselves up to the pursuit of pleasure and setting an extremely bad example to the common people by their manner of life.

At that time a dire calamity befell the Israelites. The Philistine raids upon the land of Ephraim became more and more frequent until several Israelitish tribes united in an effort to expel them once and for all. They set out to attack the enemy's main encampment, which was in Aphek. The elders advised them to take the holy Ark out of the temple of Shiloh and have it carried before them in order that their courage might never flag. When the Ark was brought to the camp of Israel, the Philistines were greatly dismayed, believing that the sacred symbol of Jehova would bring certain misfortune upon them. They mustered all their strength in a desperate fight and the Israelites were utterly defeated, with thirty thousand troops dead upon the battlefield. Hophni and Phineas, Eli's sons, were among the slain. The holy Ark fell into the hands of the Philistines, and this completed the despair of the Israelites. One of their soldiers went running from the scene of the disaster into Shiloh with the report; his garments were in rags and he was covered with dust. When he came to the

city gates, there sat Eli, the aged priest, anxiously awaiting news of the battle. The soldier rushed toward him crying: "The Israelites fled, and great was the slaughter among them. Your two sons, Hophni and Phineas, are also dead and the Ark of God is taken." The suddenness of the news was too heavy a blow for the old man to bear; he fell, stricken, from his seat, and died instantly.

In the meantime, the Philistines, emboldened by victory, were pushing farther into the interior and at last they entered the holy city of Shiloh. They destroyed it completely, not even sparing the ancient temple which had stood there since the days of Joshua. The Ephraimite city of Shiloh thus ceased to be the religious center of the Hebrews and the tribe of Ephraim therefore lost its predominance over the others. The Israelites were in a lamentable plight, oppressed by the Philistines who maintained garrisons in all the conquered cities and forbade the citizens to carry arms. At this calamitous time, with the people of Israel sunk in apparent helplessness, there appeared among them an inspired man who revived their fallen spirits and roused them once again to strike a daring blow for freedom.

§ 48.

Samuel.

One day while Eli, the high priest, was yet

alive, serving in the temple, a young woman entered the shrine and began fervently to pray. This woman, whose name was Hannah, was the wife of a Levite, Elkanah, of the city of Ramah. Hannah had come to pray to the Lord to give her a son, for she was childless, and she made a vow that if God ever granted her prayer, she would dedicate the child to service in His temple. Soon after, a son was born to Hannah and she called him Samuel. When the baby was old enough, the mother took him to the temple at Shiloh and left him in the care of the priest Eli. Samuel spent his childhood and youth in Shiloh serving in the temple like the other Levites. In mind and spirit he was far in advance of his years, being familiar with all the sacred traditions of his race and with the ancient teachings of Moses, and he cherished the ardent hope that all those sublime precepts would one day be followed and perfectly understood by all the people of Israel. Samuel believed that he was destined to lead his erring people back to the path of true religion. He felt that the spirit of a prophet was within him, and many a time wonderful visions would appear to him in the deep stillness of the night, when from the inmost chambers of the temple he would hear the voice of God announcing the terrible calamities that lay in wait for them. Samuel saw each of those calamities occur exactly as the Lord had revealed them to him; the defeat

of the Israelites in the war with the Philistines near Aphek, the capture of the holy Ark, the death of Eli and finally the destruction of Shiloh. With the demolition of the temple, Samuel's service as a Levite came to an end and his more far-reaching service as teacher and prophet began. He went about the country preaching and exhorting the people to unite. "Return to Jehovah with all your hearts," he would implore them. "Put all your strange gods away, and serve only the God who is your Lord. Then only will He deliver you from the power of the Philistines." And the people listened with attention.

Upon the death of Eli, Samuel became the Judge of the principal tribes. The temple having gone, Samuel would call the people together to worship in the Benjamite city of Mizpeh. When the Philistine chiefs learned that Mizpeh had become a meeting-place for the Israelites, they marched thither with a large army, striking terror into every heart but Samuel's. He urged the people in his sermons to resist the oncoming enemy and kindled in their minds the belief that God would be their help. Strong at last in this assurance, the Israelites left Mizpeh attacked the invading army and defeated it. Then the Philistines made peace with Israel and restored all the cities they had conquered. The Ark of Jehovah, taken in a former battle, had been returned before, for the Philistines had found that it had

brought great trouble upon them ever since they had taken it into their land. Diseases had suddenly become rife and their people had insisted upon its return in order that the anger of Jehovah might no longer pursue them with calamity. With the conclusion of this peace, war and its attendant miseries ceased for a time, and the Israelites, under Samuel's rule, lived in peace.

Samuel lived in his native city of Ramah, but traveled about to other places, and wherever he went, he would gather the people about him to worship the Lord. No new temple had been built to take the place of the main temple of Shiloh, and the priests and Levites were scattered all over the country.

Ahitub, a grandson of Eli's, had saved some of the vessels belonging to the Shiloh temple and fled with them to the city of Nob, where a small temporary temple was built. The Ark of Jehovah, on being received back from the Philistines, was kept in the city of Kirjath-jearim, and there were other altars in Bethel, Mizpeh and Gilgal. Samuel paid annual visits to each of these places, where he instructed the people, settled their disputes, held divine services and, with the assistance of Levites, made sacrificial offerings on the altars. He also trained young men to be religious teachers, calling them "pupil-prophets," and in their sermons these disciples ardently appealed to the people to put forth all their efforts towards

the betterment of their spiritual life. As a result of these united labors, the disunited tribes of Israel came gradually together once more and began to consider themselves members of a single nation.

§ 49.

The Election of a King.

When Samuel was an old man, the Israelites were again threatened by enemies from without. The Philistines renewed their raids upon the western provinces, the Ammonites harassed the dwellers on the eastern bank of the Jordan. Then the people of Israel decided that the time had come to put an end to lawlessness and to elect a King who would also be their military leader in wars against foreign aggressors.

The elders of Israel appeared before Samuel in Ramah and said to him: "You are old and your sons are not able to rule over us. Choose us a king and let him rule as is the custom with other nations." The aged prophet was greatly astonished at this request, for he had always looked upon the Hebrews as a chosen people whose king was God Himself and who must necessarily differ from other nations therefore. And there they were, asking for a king and wishing to be the same as everybody else. "Have you thought," Samuel asked them, "what kind of system you will live under if a king should come

to rule over you? He will take your sons away to his wars and turn them all into soldiers on foot or on horse. He will make them fashion weapons and build chariots of war. He will take your daughters to cook for him and prepare his food. He will make you give up your finest fields, your orchards and your vineyards to his servitors. He will force you to pay him one-tenth of your flocks and you will be his slaves. Then you will be loud in lamentation over the king you insisted upon having, but God will not heed your cries." But Samuel admonished the elders in vain, they held to it that it was necessary to have a king who would be at the same time a general capable of leading Israel into war and of bringing peace to the country. The prophet submitted unwillingly to the people's wish and began to look for a fit leader for them; he did not have far to seek.

In the Benjamite city of Gibeah there lived the family of a peasant named Kish. He had a son named Saul, a strong and brave man who loved his people with his whole heart. Like all the other members of his family Saul tilled the soil and minded the cattle, and it chanced one day that Kish lost some asses and Saul went out to look for them. On his way he visited the prophet Samuel to ask whether he would be successful in his search, and as they talked together the idea came in Samuel's mind that this tiller of

the soil, strong in body as in spirit, was destined to become the king of Israel. "Never mind the lost asses," he said to Saul, "for they are already found. As for yourself, a greater and more splendid destiny awaits you in Israel." With these words, he anointed Saul's head with oil as a sign that he would reign over the Hebrew nation, and sent him home. On his return to Gibeah, Saul fell in with a number of enthusiastic young prophets and a change came over him as he held conversation with them, until he too began to preach that the time had come when the people must be set free from the yoke of the alien.

Some time afterwards, Samuel summoned the people together at Mizpeh to choose their king and their choice fell upon Saul, the son of Kish. When the people went to find their newly chosen king, they had to trace him to the hiding-place to which he had fled for refuge against the too-great honor. They made him stand forth amongst the rest, and he was seen to tower head and shoulders above the tallest. They cheered him loudly, crying: "Hail to the King!"

A certain faction, however, was displeased at the election of Saul and they demurred, saying: "How should such a man as this save us from our enemies?" In order to win universal recognition as King, Saul saw he would have to perform some deed of heroism for his country. He

took troops into his own city of Gibea and there began preparations for war against the foreign enemies that sorrounded Israel on every side.

§ 50.

The First Victory.

At that time the Ammonites were molesting the Israelites on the eastern bank of the Jordan and the Ammonite king, Nahash, was besieging the city of Jabesh in Gilead. The inhabitants were forced to surrender and begged Nahash to make a treaty of peace with them and leave them alone in the future. The king of the Ammonites answered with disdain: "This is the kind of alliance I will make with you. I shall put out the right eye of every one of you, so that Israel may be covered with shame." The people of Gilead, thoroughly terrified, sent messengers to their kinsmen, the Israelites across the Jordan, and implored their help. And as they listened to the messengers' reports, the assembled people wept aloud.

Saul was leaving his fields when he heard the sound of wailing and he inquired the cause of it. No sooner had he heard of the situation in unhappy Gilead, than he decided to go there immediately and help them in their trouble. He took two calves, cut them into pieces and distributed the pieces amongst all the tribes of Israel, saying: "Thus shall it be done with the cattle of

every Israelite who will not follow Saul and Samuel to the war." The people rose up and in a short time a numerous army was ready for the battle. At the head of his legions Saul fell upon the Ammonites unawares, defeated them and delivered the beleaguered city of Jabesh.

After this victory the Israelites gladly recognized Saul as their king, and his accession to the throne was celebrated at Gilgal with great solemnity. Then Samuel took leave of the people over whom he had ruled so long. "Declare before God and your king," said the old man to them, "whether in all my life I ever insulted or oppressed you. Did I ever take away an ass or an ox from any man? Did I ever accept a bribe?" And the people answered with one voice: "No; you have neither insulted nor oppressed us in all your life." Then Samuel addressed the assembly, exhorting the king and the people always to observe the law of God. The aged prophet promised to pray for the nation and to be its spiritual leader in the future as he had been in the past.

CHAPTER VI

The Reign of Saul, 1067-1055 B. C.

SAUL devoted the first two years of his reign to the organizing of a well-trained standing army consisting of three thousand picked men, which in time of war was reinforced by the people's militia. The King himself was General-in-Chief of the army but one of the regiments was commanded by his eldest son, Jonathan, renowned for his great bravery. Jonathan was the first to provoke a decisive battle with the Philistines who had not yet ceased to molest the Israelites. They refused to withdraw their soldiers from the Benjamite cities, and persecuted the inhabitants besides laying upon them a burden of heavy taxation. The young Jonathan burned to free his people from the enemy's long oppression. He invaded Gibeah with his men and killed the leader of the Philistine troops. When the news of this exploit was brought to the Philistine princes they gathered a great army with many horsemen and chariots of war and set out against the Israelites.

The Philistine camp was in Michmash, and the Israelites encamped opposite them in Gilgal. Saul's army was very small indeed, for many of the Israelites, when they heard that the Philistine hordes were about to descend upon them, had fled to the mountains and hidden in caves and among the rocks. The Israelites had neither good horsemen nor any chariots, nor were they even adequately armed, for all the smiths and armorers had been driven out of their towns by the enemy long ago, so that there had been no possible means of forging or sharpening sword or spear. Saul did not at once attack the enemy, but the courage of Jonathan precipitated a decisive encounter. The Philistine camp was situated upon steep hill surrounded by deep ditches, and one day Jonathan and his armor-bearers quietly climbed the hillside and shot several arrows into the Philistine camp, creating wild consternation there, for the invaders concluded that the daring bowmen must be the advance-guard of a great army, and they fled, terror-stricken, in all directions. Saul pursued them with his army and drove them far away. The Israelites who had run away from the fight then left their hiding-places in the mountains and armed with picks and bludgeons, attacked stray bands of the fugitive enemy and slew them. Thus Israel was once more delivered from its worst foe and the country entered upon another period of free-

dom. Saul was everywhere hailed as the liberator of his people, and his position on the throne was greatly strengthened on account of his military successes. Having thus secured his authority, Saul proceeded to establish his court in his native Benjamite city of Gibeah, which came afterwards to be called Saul's Gibeah. The king lived in great simplicity. In the holiday seasons, and on days when the new moon appeared, offerings were made at the court and friends and kinsmen of the king, mostly Benjamite, were invited to his table. One of Saul's closest friends was his cousin Abner, a very able military leader whom Saul had appointed chief of the whole army. The king exacted the strictest observance of all religious laws and in an attempt to eradicate the evil effects of superstition among his subjects, he expelled all magicians and fortune-tellers from the country. Very soon, however, a new war diverted his attention from the internal affairs of his kingdom.

§ 52.

The Amalekite War.

One day Samuel, the prophet, appeared before Saul and bade him, in the name of God, make war upon the savage Amalekites, nomads of the desert that lay on the southern border of Canaan. The Israelites' hatred of this tribe dated from the days when they had often suffered robbery and

ill-treatment at the hands of the desert pirates while they were wandering through the wilderness after the exodus from Egypt. "Go now, and smite Amelek," said Samuel to the king. "Destroy everything they possess and spare neither man nor woman, neither ox nor sheep nor camel nor ass." So Saul assembled his army and moved toward the southern border. Entering the land of the Amalekites, the Israelites killed all the inhabitants and destroyed their herds. Only Agag, the king, was spared and taken prisoner, and a few choice sheep and cattle.

Saul took pity on Agag and was unwilling to put him to death, nor did he wish to kill all the animals, so he kept them as booty, disregarding the prophet's command. When Samuel came into the camp, Saul told him that he had fulfilled the will of God and defeated the enemy. "Why then do I hear the bleating of sheep and the bellowing of oxen?" asked the prophet sternly. The King answered that he had spared only Agag, and that his men had left alive part of the Amalekites' herds and flocks in order to offer them up as sacrifices to God. "The Lord is better pleased by obedience," cried Samuel, "than by sacrifices. You rejected the word of God and God rejects you now. You shall be king no longer." And the prophet turned away from Saul in deep anger. It was very hard for Saul to hear himself thus condemned and sentenced in the presence

of all his subjects and he said to Samuel: "It is true that I have sinned, yet before my people you could show me more respect than this. Return with me and I will go and pray." Samuel then returned and ordered the cruel Amalekite King Agag to be brought before him; and when he appeared the prophet spoke to him, saying: "As your sword made other mothers childless, so shall your mother also be made childless." And Agag was beheaded in Gilgal.

This accomplished, Samuel set out for his home in Ramah, and Saul returned to Gibeah. But the king and the prophet had parted forever and never saw one another again. Samuel decided that Saul was unfit to govern Israel and began to look for a man more worthy of the king's throne.

§ 53.

David at the Court of King Saul.

In the city of Bethlehem which was in Judea, there lived a venerable man named Jesse who had eight sons, the youngest of whom, David, was a handsome, sensible and brave youth. David spent his childhood in the fields about Bethlehem where he tended his father's flocks while he amused himself singing pastoral airs to the accompaniment of a harp. Samuel, so runs the legend, met the boy one day and with his prophet's vision, beheld in him the future king of

Israel. Soon after this first meeting, Samuel went again to Bethlehem and told David what the future held in store for him, at the same time anointing his head with oil as was the custom when choosing a new king. All this took place secretly and unknown to anyone except the family of Jesse, the youth's father.

The Amalekite war had left Saul in a state of the deepest melancholy. He could not forget the angry words with which Samuel had greeted his victory and was in great fear lest his unfortunate act of disobedience should hasten the end of his reign which had not lasted very long at the time of the war. Observing the dejection of their king, his courtiers said to him: "Why do you not send for a man who might cheer your gloom with the music of a harp?" And they sent out messengers all over the country to find a musician for the sad king. Then they heard that one David of Bethlehem was highly skilled upon the instrument and they brought him to Gibeah into the house of the king. Saul liked the youth and made him his armor-bearer, and whenever his black mood was upon him David would take his harp and play until cheerfulness returned under the spell of his singing.

Soon after his arrival in Gibeah an act of great heroism made David's name famous throughout the land. It happened that the Philistines had gathered an army together and were

again marching upon the Israelites. The armies of both sides stood ready near Bethlehem for forty days without giving battle; at last a warrior from the enemy's camp came forward, a man of gigantic stature named Goliath, and shouted over to the Israelites: "Choose a fighter from your ranks and let him fight with me. If I kill him you will be our slaves and if he kill me we shall be yours." When Saul heard this, he made it known that the Israelite who overcame the giant in single combat should wed his own daughter and receive great wealth besides. But the appearance of the huge man, armed from head to foot, struck such fear into every heart that none of the Hebrew warriors found courage to respond to his challenge. As they hesitated and fell back, David arrived at the camp whither he had come from his fields in Bethlehem where he had been visiting his brothers. When he heard of Goliath's proposal, he declared that he was ready to meet him there and then. A laugh greeted his foolhardiness and Saul said to him: "How should you, so young and tender, fight with this giant who has been at war since his very childhood?" But David answered that he was bound to defend the honor of his people and that he hoped for the help of God in the fray. Saul then gave him his own armor, putting his shirt of mail upon the youth's body and his helmet of

brass upon his head and girding him with his own sword. But David, unaccustomed to the weight of mail, found the armor too heavy for him, so he took it off and with nothing but his staff and a bow and arrow and five sharp stones in his shepherd's pouch, he went out to meet the Philistine. When he saw the Israelite, Goliath said angrily: "Am I a dog that you meet me with a stick?" But David was nothing daunted and kept straight on towards him. At a little distance from Goliath he stopped, and taking one of the stones from his pouch he threw it with such sure aim that it struck the giant on the forehead and he fell to the ground. So encumbered was the Philistine in his massive armor that he could not rise and David, taking advantage of his helplessness shot several arrows into him as he lay struggling. Then he ran up to the prostrate giant and pulling his great sword out of its sheath, he cut off his head. When the enemy beheld the slaying of their giant they fled in terror and the Israelites pursued and destroyed them all. True to his promise, the king gave the young hero his youngest daughter, Michal, in marriage, with a rich dowry.

§ 54.

The Struggle Between Saul and David.

The victory over Goliath brought widespread fame to David and when he returned home with

Saul at the head of the Israelitish armies, the women came out to meet them dancing and singing. "Saul defeated thousands of Philistines," rang their song, "but David defeated tens of thousands." It angered Saul that the young armor-bearer should receive more praise than the King himself and he feared lest David become the people's favorite and seize the throne. From that day of their homecoming, therefore, Saul hated David and desired to be rid of him.

One day as the king lay plunged in melancholy, and David was trying to cheer him with the music of his harp, Saul, in a sudden access of rage, threw his javelin at the youth, missing him by a hair's breadth as David sprang nimbly aside and escaped the shaft. David stayed no longer in the king's house after this attempt on his life and Saul appointed him chief over a thousand warriors, sending him always into the most dangerous battles wherever his chances of returning alive were slightest. Though David had incurred the hatred of the king, Saul's noble son, Jonathan, was deeply attached to the young hero and loved him as his own brother. When Jonathan tried to make peace between his father and David, Saul answered him angrily, saying: "Do you know that so long as David lives, your position as the future king of Israel remains uncertain?"

There came a day when the king ordered his servants to go at dawn to David's house and kill him there, but David's wife, Michal, discovering the plot, made him leave the house at night by way of a window, so that the assassins, when they arrived at daybreak, did not find him. David fled to Ramah where the aged prophet Samuel lived, and there was secretly visited by his friend Jonathan who advised him to flee still farther, in order to put himself out of reach of Saul's fury. The two friends embraced and kissed one another at parting and wept bitterly.

David set out for Nob, "the city of priests," where stood the temporary temple of Jehovah. The high priest, Abimelech, a grandson of Eli, welcomed him and gave him the sword which he had taken from Goliath and which had since been kept in the temple. From Nob David fled still further towards the Philistine border and finally reached Adullam, where he found a cave to live in. There he was joined by a great many malcontents, adventurers and other outlaws, who urged him to become their leader. Saul, meanwhile, having learned that David had visited Nob and had been given a friendly reception by the priests there, ordered Ahimelech and the other priests to come before him at Gibeah. When they arrived he asked them furi-

ously: "Why did you give bread and weapons to my enemy, David? Why did you give your blessing to a man who rose in revolt against me?" Ahimelech replied that David was welcomed as the king's son-in-law and that the priests knew nothing of the cause of his flight. But Saul refused to hear their explanations, and ordered his minions to put Ahimelech, his family and fifty-eight priests besides, to death. One man only escaped, Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech, and he fled to join David in Adullam.

David, at the head of his armed band, wandered from place to place, and the company of rovers was soon joined by his relatives from Bethlehem, Joab among the rest, a son of David's sister and already famous for the courage that distinguished his later career as one of Israel's great generals. The outlaws numbered also many foreigners, Philistines and Hittites. David and his men were not able to stay long anywhere, being always closely pursued by Saul with his army. One day the king's men came unknowingly very near to David's camp and Saul himself walked into the dark cave where David and his followers lay hidden. In the darkness the king failed to discern them, and David's men said: "Now the Lord has delivered your enemy into your hands in order that you may deal with him as you will." But David answered: "I cannot lift my hand against the

King, God's anointed." And quietly, he approached Saul from behind and cut off the edge of his mantle. But Saul walked on quite unconscious of the action and when he stepped out of the cave into the light, David followed him and showed him the cloth he had cut from his garment. "You believe I am your enemy, King," he said, "yet, but a moment ago I had you in my power and did you no harm. God knows I have done no wrong against you; let Him judge between us." Touched by David's magnanimity, Saul wept and said: "Is it your voice I hear, David my son? You are right and I am wrong, for you have never done harm to me, though I have done much to you. I know that you will be ruler over Israel. Only swear that you will not destroy my family when I am dead." David swore that he would not, and they parted. Very soon, however, Saul had forgotten the incident and begun to persecute David anew.

§ 55.

The Death of Saul.

About this time, Samuel, the aged prophet and protector of David, died, and David was afraid to remain in Judea where Saul's men were pursuing him. So he went with his six hundred followers into the land of the Philistines. The Philistine king, Achish, welcomed

him, thinking that David, as Saul's enemy, would now help the Philistines in their war against his people. At David's request, the king set apart a city for him and his men to live in in their own fashion. The name of the city was Ziklag, and with that as their base, the exiles made frequent raids upon the Amalekites and other savage tribes south of Canaan, thus acquiring a great deal of booty. To Achish David said that he was making raids upon the Hebrews and the Philistine ruler believed him. This went on for a year until Achish again mustered an army and declared war on the Israelites. David and his men were put in the rear ranks, but when the other Philistine princes saw him they said to Achish: "Why are these Hebrews here? This is the same David of whom the women sing that he killed tens of thousands of Philistines; how, then, should he find grace in the eyes of his master Saul unless by taking to him the heads of our own soldiers?" So Achish was forced to send David and his men back to Ziklag, to David's great joy.

Hearing that the Philistines were making ready for another war, Saul and his army encamped in the valley of Jezreel, near the mountains of Gilboa, and there the king awaited the coming of the enemy, a prey to fear and the gloomiest forebodings. Under stress of his anguish and terror, Saul grew very superstí-

tious, and in his anxiety to know the fate that lay before him, he visited a certain sorceress who lived in Endor. Under cover of night he betook himself to her house disguised, so that no one might know what he had done, and he asked her to summon the ghost of the dead prophet Samuel from the grave. Immediately, in the mysterious darkness of the night, an old man's form appeared which Saul recognized as the dead prophet. "Why have you called me from my rest?" angrily demanded the apparition, and Saul fell on his knees before him and cried: "Samuel, I am in deep distress. The Philistines attack me and the Lord has turned against me. Tell me what to do!" And Samuel answered: "The Lord has turned from you indeed on account of your disobedience in the Amalekite war, and he has given your throne to David. He is about to deliver you and all the Israelites into the hands of the enemy and tomorrow you and your sons will be with me." Saul trembled to hear the words of the prophet and fell prostrate on the ground. Only with the greatest difficulty could the sorceress prevail upon him to sustain his strength with the food she had prepared for him.

Next day the Israelites and the Philistines engaged in a terrific battle which ended in victory for the Philistines, while thousands of Hebrew corpses covered the hills of Gilboa. Jona-

than and two other sons of Saul fell in the fray and Saul himself was mortally wounded by the arrows of the enemy. Aware of the approach of death, Saul said to his armor-bearer: "Draw your sword and kill me lest I fall into the hands of these foreigners who will put me to torture before they slay me." But the armor-bearer dared not kill his king. Saul then threw himself upon his own sword and so died. Next day the Philistines found the body of the King of Israel and hung it upon the wall of the city of Beth-Shan as a token of victory. When the news of this desecration reached the inhabitants of Jabesh, whom Saul had once delivered from the Ammonites, they sent men to Beth-Shan to take the dead king's body down from the wall. This was accomplished under cover of night and the body was carried to Jabesh and there buried.

David heard of the death of Saul and his sons from an Amalekite who had fled from the battlefield to Ziklag. The Amalekite, believing that David would rejoice at his news even boasted that he himself had killed the king of Israel. But David crying "How dared you raise your hand against God's anointed?" gave orders that the man be killed for his evil deed. According to the Bible, David mourned the death of Saul and of Jonathan, his friend, in the following sad psalm:

"The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen! Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the foreigners triumph. You mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, nor rain upon you, nor fertile fields, for there the shield of the mighty is cast away, the shield of Saul, as if he was not anointed. From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty. Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided; they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. You, daughters of Israel, weep over Saul who clothed you in scarlet, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel. How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, you were slain in the high places! I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan! Very pleasant were you to me; your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!

CHAPTER VII

The Reign of David—1055-1015 B. C.

§ 56.

David in Jerusalem.

PON the death of Saul, the people as a whole did not immediately recognize David as their king. When he returned to his own city of Hebron from the land of the Philistines he was proclaimed king only by his own followers and his relatives of the tribe of Judah. The other tribes, especially the Benjamites, to which Saul had belonged, proclaimed as their king the late king's next in descent, his youngest son Ish-bosheth. Thus there were two kings at the same time in Israel, David in Jerusalem and Ish-bosheth in the City of Mahanaim beyond the Jordan. For several years the struggle between the factions on both sides continued with great violence, David's troops led by Joab and Ish-bo-sheth's by Abner. In the end Abner was defeated and Ish-bo-sheth, a very weak and ineffectual man, was forsaken by his followers

and later on assassinated by two conspirators. All the tribes then recognized David as their King.

David was thirty years of age when he became the ruler over all Israel. The elders of each tribe came to him at Hebron and anointed him as king, and the people recalled his past heroism in the Philistine wars and looked to him in his new position, to make their country glorious and independent. Their hopes were soon realized.

David's first action was to make war on the foreigners who lived in the interior of Canaan. On the border between the lands of the Benjamites and the Judeans, the small but powerful tribe of Jebusites had lived for many years. This tribe had remained unconquered by the Hebrews at the time of Joshua's wars and had remained independent ever since in their own well-fortified city of Jerusalem and its environs. Jerusalem stood upon a hill and to the south was another hill called Zion on which a fortress had been built. David and his men went out against the Jebusites and besieged Zion. The Jebusites mocked him, saying that a fortress as strong as that could be defended by the blind and crippled against any invader. But David's army went bravely ahead and soon the "impregnable" place fell into their hands. The Jebusites were expelled from Jerusalem and

David, leaving Hebron, chose Jerusalem as his permanent home. He lived in the fortress of Zion which came to be called the city of David, surrounded by his followers. Later on he brought masons and carpenters from the Phoenician city of Tyre to build a palace for him, and as the population of Jerusalem gradually increased, many other beautiful buildings rose up within its walls, and the city became known as the capital of the Hebrew kingdom. It was David's wish that his capital should be a holy city as well as the center of his dominions, so he set out with a multitude of his subjects for Kirjath-jearim and removed therefrom the Ark of Jehovah which had been kept there since the time of the prophet Samuel. The Ark was carried into the "city of David" with solemn ceremonial and great rejoicing and placed there in a special tent or tabernacle made of fabrics of great price. A sacrificial altar was built near by. The high priest of the new tabernacle was Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech who had been killed at Nob. David had received him with friendliness when he sought refuge with him in Adullam and Abiathar had followed him ever since, in all his wanderings and wars.

The news that David had firmly established himself in a new capital greatly disturbed the Philistines. So far from becoming their ally and vassal, as they had hoped he would, they

found him trying to re-unite all the people of Israel in order to rid the land permanently of all foreigners. The Philistines therefore invaded the territory occupied by the Judeans and took possession of David's native city of Bethlehem. David and his valiant soldiers, meeting the enemy near the city, fought like lions and the Philistine army was utterly annihilated. The courage of the Israelitish warriors in this encounter, is best illustrated by the following incident:

One day during the campaign, David was seized with a great thirst, and the only well from which water could be procured was near the gate of Bethlehem which Philistine sentries were guarding. But three of David's men, at the risk of their lives, slipped past the sentries, drew some water from the well and took it to the king. But David refused to drink it, saying: "God forbid that I should drink this water which my men have brought for me at the risk of their lives. I might as well drink their blood."

After several furious engagements, the Philistines were at last driven out of David's kingdom, but he was not yet satisfied. His aim was completely to subdue these old enemies of Israel and he therefore led his invading army into the Philistines' land, where Gath and the surrounding country fell into his hands. This victory added still greater glory to the record of Israel's

warriors and the power of the Philistine kings was forever destroyed. David continued his conquests of the enemy territory, and laid the people under tribute. Then, having secured his southwestern border against invasion, he turned his attention to the enemy in the east and severely defeated the Moabites and Ammonites beyond the Jordan. Aramean forces came out of Syria to help the Ammonites but David defeated these also and himself penetrated into Syria and seized the city of Damascus. His chief lieutenant in these wars was his nephew Joab, the leader of David's own original troop of followers. This gallant chieftain also took part in the war with the Edomites in the south near the Dead Sea. The land of Edom fell to the Israelites who appointed a viceroy to govern it.

§ 57.

David's Domestic Government.

The kingdom of Israel rose to its greatest power under the rule of David. All the neighboring nations who had oppressed the Hebrews in the past now trembled before them and the name of the great King of Israel was famous throughout the East. In order to maintain his supremacy, David had to be able to draw upon enormous military resources. In time of war, each tribe was bound to furnish a certain num-

ber of men over twenty years of age and fit for military service. Experienced officials, called advisors, scribes and recorders, helped David in his civil government, and two prophets, Gad and Nathan, were also part of the king's permanent entourage.

In his home life, David permitted himself a certain degree of luxury but far less than was customary with the other eastern rulers. He lived in his handsome palace in Jerusalem which he had had built by Phoenician craftsmen and maintained a bodyguard of foreign mercenaries. He possessed many estates, vineyards and flocks. According to the oriental custom he had several wives.

Michal, his first wife, had married another man when her father King Saul had persecuted David into exile but after David ascended the throne she returned to him. As time passed other wives came to the King's household, all of whom, with the exception of Michal. bore him sons and daughters. His eldest son was named Amnon and of the others, the best known were Absalom and Adonijah. None of these three, however, was destined to succeed his father on the throne; his heir was the son of a woman who came into the royal household in the following manner:

One evening David was taking the air on the roof of his palace and from a distance he saw

a woman bathing. She was of wondrous beauty and the King, inquiring who she was, learned that her name was Bath-Sheba and that she was the wife of one of his military chiefs, a Hittite named Uriah. The King was overcome by the beauty of Bath-Sheba and ardently desired to make her his wife, but this could not be since she was already the wife of another man. David then resolved to commit an evil and cruel deed. It was during a bloody war with the Ammonites, and Uriah was fighting under Joab, commander-in-chief of the Israelite army, when David sent a secret order to Joab to send Uriah and his detachment into the thickest of the fight and not allow anyone to go to his relief in case of an attack by the enemy. Joab did as he was ordered, and Uriah perished in the fray. Bath-Sheba mourned her dead husband, but when the time of mourning was over she was taken to the palace and became the king's wife.

Nathan, the prophet, David's spiritual guide, was greatly dismayed at the king's conduct in this affair, and he went to him and told him the following parable:

"There lived two men in a certain city," related the man of wisdom, "one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had many sheep and calves, but the poor man had only one lamb which he cherished fondly. The lamb lived in

his house, ate and drank with him and was like a daughter to him. One day a visitor came to the rich man, but he was unwilling to kill any of his own sheep to make a meal for his guest, so he sent a servant to take away the poor man's only lamb, and kill it to serve to the visitor."

When Nathan came to the end of his story, David cried out indignantly: "This cruel rich man who is without pity for his poor neighbors shall surely be punished by death, and he shall be made to pay fourfold for the lamb he stole." Then the prophet answered: "It is you who acted like that rich man. God gave you the glory of a King, great riches and many wives, yet you sent Uriah to die by the sword of Ammon and took away his only wife. God shall surely punish you for it by turning one of your own family against you when the time comes." David, now deeply repentant, said: "Yes, I have sinned against the Lord." Soon after this, Bath-Sheba bore him a son who was named Solomon, and Nathan the prophet called the child Jedidiah, which means "the Lord's beloved." It was this child, David's youngest son, who was destined to inherit the throne of Israel.

§ 58.

The Rebellion of Absalom.

The prophet's prediction that the king's own

household would rise against him came true. The king had many sons and daughters by his various wives, the eldest being Ammon, a man of savage and unrestrained temper who took it for granted that the throne would pass to him on the death of his father.

One day Ammon insulted his half-sister, the beautiful Tama, and she complained to her own brother, the proud prince Absalom, who swore to avenge her. It was near the sheep-shearing season and when the work was done, Absalom made a feast in his house to which he invited all his brothers. During the feast, Absalom's servants, in accordance with their master's orders, attacked Ammon and slew him. The news of this occurrence came as a great shock to David; he deeply mourned his murdered son and his rage against the perpetrators of the crime knew no bounds. Absalom, in terror of his father's wrath, left Jerusalem and fled to another country where he remained for three years. Time gradually healed David's sorrow and at last he yielded to his courtiers' entreaties and forgave Absalom, giving him permission to return to Jerusalem.

But the homecoming of the disgraced prince brought no joy to his father. Absalom was very ambitious too, and cherished the belief that he would succeed his father on the throne of Israel. Manly, clever and handsome, with long,

thick curls that hung down upon his shoulders, he was admired and loved by the populace. Calculating how he might make his popularity serve his own ends, he decided to stir up a revolt against his father and not wait for him to die before seizing the throne. The method he employed to create the insurrection was that of filling the people's minds with ideas of discontent and protest at every turn. The now aged king had arrived at a time of life when he was no longer able to attend to all the affairs of state himself and it often happened that some who went to him with requests or complaints, were obliged to go away unheard. The disappointed ones would leave the presence of the king in great displeasure, and whenever Absalom would chance to meet any of them, he would say: "Your cause is just, but the king refused to hear it. If I were Judge in this land, I should do justice to everyone and nobody would go away dissatisfied from my court." Little by little Absalom succeeded in rallying a great many people to his side; his followers were to be found even among the courtiers themselves. One of the shrewdest of David's advisors, Achitophel, also joined forces with the rebellious son, and at last, Absalom, confident in his strength, took two hundred men to Hebron, from which city he sent out messengers to other cities with the following instructions: "When

you hear the blast of trumpets, you shall proclaim to the people that Absalom is the King of Hebron." Multitudes joined Absalom and the uprising spread with great rapidity.

The news of his son's revolt shocked the king profoundly. He was not prepared for civil war and in fear lest the rebels should attack the capital, he decided to leave Jerusalem and array his troops for the coming battle farther away from the center of Absalom's activities. So with his family and household, he left the city, followed by an army of six hundred men. When the people saw their old king leaving his capital, they wept aloud. The high priests, Abiathar and Zadok, took the holy Ark and started out with the fugitive David, but he bade them stay in Jerusalem. "If the Lord wish it," said he, "I shall return here and see His abode again; if he wish otherwise, His will be done." An old friend and advisor of the king's, the wise Hushai, also wanted greatly to go with him, but David said to him: "If you come with me you will only be a burden. Stay, rather, in Jerusalem and by pretending to be Absalom's loyal servant, you will be able to frustrate all the plans of Achitophel. Tell Abiathar and Zadok whatever news you glean and they will send messengers to inform me."

Soon after David's departure, Absalom entered Jerusalem and proclaimed himself king.

The clever Achitophel advised him to lose no time in pursuing David before he had time to prepare to meet the rebel troops, but Hushai intercepted this too-sound advice and went to Absalom posing as his friend, and persuaded him not to do as Achitophel counselled. "For you know," he argued, "that at the present moment, the rage and fury of your father and his followers are making them as savage as the beasts of the forest. The first encounter may mean defeat for you, and it would be by far wiser to wait until all Israel is with you from one end of the land to the other. Then under your leadership we could attack the king's army and certainly destroy it." Absalom was persuaded that Hushai's advice was good, never suspecting that its object was to gain time for David and enable him to make adequate preparations for dealing with the rebellion. But Achitophel, being a man of keen intelligence, was not deceived, and realizing that by taking Hushai's advice Absalom had achieved his own downfall, he went back to his home and there hanged himself.

While Absalom remained idle in Jerusalem waiting, David had crossed the Jordan and reached the city of Mehanaim, where he drew up all his forces for a decisive encounter with the rebels. At last Absalom assembled a great army and set out in the direction of the river

to attack his father. His troops, though numerically far superior to the king's, lacked a concerted plan of action, while David's trained generals, on their side, had laid out every detail of their campaign with the utmost foresight and caution. The engagement took place in the forest of Ephraim, and the king's army, led by Joab, put Absalom's completely to flight. Absalom himself fled on a mule into an adjoining forest where, passing under a mighty oak, his long hair became entangled in the low-hanging branches. The mule ran on, leaving Absalom hanging in mid-air, and Joab who had followed him, killed him with a shot from his bow as he hung helplessly from the tree. His body was afterwards taken down and thrown into a pit which the soldiers then filled with many stones. So overwhelmed was David at hearing of his son's terrible end, that he lost all joy of his victory. In the grief of the father the wisdom of the King was forgotten, and the aged and brokenhearted man sat alone in his chamber, weeping and moaning: "O Absalom, my son, would God I had died for you, O my son."

§ 59.

The Last Years of David's Reign.

The civil war begun by Absalom did not end with his death. The majority of the rebels had assembled in Gilgal to declare their allegiance

to David when a Benjamite named Sheba came forward, blowing on a trumpet. "We refuse to acknowledge David as our king," he cried. "Israelites, return to your tents." Thereupon most of the people again withdrew their loyalty from David and followed Sheba, leaving only the tribe of Judah to accompany the king back to Jerusalem. Immediately upon his arrival in the capital, David gave orders to his generals to marshall all available troops and pursue Sheba before he had time to occupy any fortified city. The king's army, led by Joab, swept like a hurricane over the land and everywhere the inhabitants of the rebel cities capitulated before it, forsaking Sheba once more for David. Everywhere, that is, except in Abel, a fortified city in the north of the Danite country which Sheba had had time, in spite of David's precautions, to occupy.

Joab surrounded the city, intending to destroy it after it had fallen into his hands, but one of the citizens, a woman of great wisdom, called to him from the walls, saying: "Would you destroy a whole city of Israel for the misdeed of one man?" And Joab answered that he would let the rest go unharmed if they would voluntarily deliver Sheba to him. They agreed to do so and Sheba was beheaded and his head thrown over the city wall to Joab. Then the king's general sounded his trumpet and with-

drew his army and the siege was over. The last of the insurgents had been put down and the country settled back once more into peace.

Then David called the prophet Nathan to him and told him that he wished to replace the old small tent in Jerusalem where the Ark was housed, with a great new temple to which the people might come in their numbers to worship. But the prophet said to him: "You may not build the house of God for you have shed much blood in your lifetime. But your son Solomon, who is to inherit your throne, will be a man of peace and he shall build the temple of Jehovah."

David then commanded that the materials for the building of the temple and gold and silver for its ornaments, be immediately collected so that everything might be ready at the beginning of the new reign. But he did not live to see the end of this work of preparation.

Not even in his last years was David to know peace. Queen Bath-Sheba had set her heart on securing the succession for her son Solomon and her cause was supported by the prophet Nathan and certain of the king's officials. But Prince Adonijah, as David's eldest surviving son, after Absalom, considered himself the rightful heir. Adonijah lived in great luxury and was accustomed to ride about the capital in a magnificent chariot preceded by fifty horsemen. He succeeded in attracting to his cause men of great

influence at the court, including Joab, the general-in-chief, and Abiathar, the High Priest. When the time came that David's death was hourly expected, Adinojah made a great feast with sacrificial offerings, and his followers shouted: "Long live King Adonijah." Queen Bath-Sheba, the mother of Solomon, was very much alarmed at this and carried her complaints to the king. Then the young Solomon, by David's command, was mounted on a mule and led through the city surrounded by priests and warriors. The procession halted at the Brook Gihon where Zadok the priest anointed the youth's head with holy oil and amidst the sound of trumpets, proclaimed him king of Israel. With joyful, shouting multitudes running before and after, Solomon returned to the palace and took his place upon the throne.

Soon after, the aged King David died, having reigned for forty years. Solomon's first action on becoming king was the quick suppression of the revolt started by by his brother Adonijah, who, with his followers, Joab amongst the rest, was put to death. Thenceforth the power of Solomon was unquestioned in Israel.

CHAPTER VIII

King Solomon 1015-977 B. C.

§ 60.

The Reign of Solomon.

SOLOMON was very young when he ascended the throne, being but twenty-five years of age. Long wars had made the vast kingdom he inherited from his father secure at last against invasion, and the task now lay before him to maintain that security and give the people leisure to enjoy the fruits of peace in the development of agriculture, commerce and industry. He acquitted himself of that task with great glory and honor. Solomon was not a warlike, but a peace-loving man—his very name resembled the word "sholom," which is Hebrew for "peace," and he possessed all the qualities of a ruler and a judge.

The young king soon became famous for his wisdom, and his faculty for deciding the right and wrong of even the most difficult cases was

infallible. A legend tells how he first acquired fame as a judge: Two women came before him in court and begged him to settle their quarrel. "I live in the same house with this woman," began one, indicating the other, "and recently a son was born to me. Three days later my neighbor also bore a son. One night this woman's son was suffocated by her in her sleep, and when she saw that he was dead, she got up from her bed and noiselessly took my baby from me as we slept, leaving her baby in his place. In the morning I woke to nurse my child and found him dead beside me, but as I looked closer, I saw that it was not my son at all."

The other woman spoke then, saying: "That is not true. It is my son that is alive and yours is dead." And both fell into fierce argument before the king, each declaring that the living boy was hers and the dead one her neighbor's. It was very difficult to arrive at the truth of the matter so Solomon resorted to a ruse. He ordered that a sword be brought into court and said to the slave who brought it, "Now cut this living boy in half and give half to one woman and half to the other." When the king's order was heard, one of the women cried out: "O King, do not touch the child, I beseech you. I would rather my rival have him than that he should be harmed." But the other shouted: "No, cut him up, O King. If I cannot have

him, let her not have him either." All present then recognised the real mother in the woman who could not bear to see the child hurt and the king gave him to her while everyone marvelled at the wisdom he had shown in deciding the case.

Another legend relates how Solomon surpassed all his contemporaries in learning, even the wise men of the East and the most learned Egyptian priests. He composed songs and parables and "knew the speech of trees, beasts, fishes and reptiles," which means that he made a close study of all nature. The name of Solomon in ancient Hebrew literature stands for precepts of wisdom just as David's stands for all that is most beautiful in the poetry of Israel.

The Biblical chronicler further relates how "in the days of Solomon Israel lived peacefully, every man under his own vine and his own fig-tree." Solomon did not spend his life in the battlefield as David had done. The small surrounding tribes such as the Edomites and the Ammonites were vassals of Israel and paid tribute, while the neighboring kingdoms were bound to Israel by permanent treaties of peace. The wealthy kingdom of Phoenicia was the Hebrews' nearest neighbor: the powerful and highly civilized realm of Egypt lay beyond their southern frontier and the Mesopotamian kingdoms,

including Aram and Damascus, bounded their country on the north. With all these independent kingdoms Solomon established commercial relations by which the Israelites, being an agricultural people, exchanged their grain and fruit for Phoenician timber from the cedar groves of Lebanon, and for Egyptian chariots and horses. The principal trade route of caravans plying between Mesopotamia and Egypt lay through the land of Israel, and Solomon caused resting-places to be built at convenient intervals along the way where the merchants and their camels could put up, and storehouses where they might keep their wares. Like the Phoenicians, the Israelites carried on an overseas commerce as well; their navigators sailed to the marvellous land of Ophir (India or Southern Arabia), and brought back with them precious metals, ivory, spices and all manner of costly merchandise. The Israelites came thus into contact with all the more enlightened nations of Asia and Africa.

Solomon even established marriage alliances with foreign rulers, one of his wives being the daughter of the mighty Pharaoh of Egypt. He followed the example of the other oriental rulers in making his capital a rich and splendid city. Magnificent buildings arose in all parts of Jerusalem, the most remarkable of all being the temple of Jehovah and the royal palace.

§ 61.

The Building of the Temple.

Soon after his accession to the throne, Solomon began to carry out his father's plan for a great temple of Jehovah in Jerusalem, and he chose for its site Mount Moriah in the northwestern section of the city. Immense quantities of stone and wood were required for the building and there was plenty of stone in Canaan proper. Tens of thousands of workmen were drafted from the subject Canaanite tribes to hew the stone out of the mountain quarries into slabs which were then conveyed to the site of the temple. For the wood, Solomon had established connections with Hiram, King of Phoenicia, whose capital, Tyre, was famous for the beauty of its architecture. Hiram agreed to give Solomon cedar and cypress from the forests of Lebanon and to send the rafts by sea to Jaffa, the nearest seaport to Jerusalem. Thirty thousand Israelites were employed to cut down the trees; the tree-felling force was divided into three groups of ten thousand each, which worked alternately for one month and rested for two. Hiram sent the rafts down to Jaffa and at the same time despatched skilled masons and carpenters to Jerusalem from Tyre. In exchange for these services, Solomon gave Hiram certain quantities of wheat, oil and wine

for as long as the work of construction lasted.

Not until all the materials had been assembled, did the actual building begin. Stone slabs formed the main structure of the temple whose inner walls were covered with boards of cedar carved with flowers, palms, and cherubim. The temple consisted of an outer shrine called the Sanctuary, and an inner one at the extreme end of the building which was called "Debir," or The Holy of Holies. Two cherubim carved out of olive-wood and overlaid with gold, guarded the Ark of Jehovah with their outspread wings, and the place lay in a perpetual mysterious twilight. The Sanctuary contained the censers of incense, the candlesticks, the table that held the sacred bread and many ritual vessels, all of pure gold. A magnificent gallery supported by massive brass columns surrounded the shrine on three sides. Outside the Sanctuary was the spacious walled courtyard where stood a great altar of solid bronze, and a brass basin in which the priests washed their hands and which was of such immense size that the people called it "the brass sea." Other vessels connected with the ritual of sacrifice were also kept in this court.

The wonderful temple took several years to build and was finished about the year 1000 B. C. when a feast of dedication was proclaimed throughout Israel. During the autumn

holidays, in the month of Tishri, great multitudes of Hebrews came to Jerusalem from all parts of the country and saw the High Priest place the Ark that held the tablets bearing the ten commandments in the Holy of Holies under the protecting wings of the sentinel cherubim. Dense clouds of incense filled the chamber, reminding the people of Jehovah's first dwelling, the austere, majestic mountain of Sinai. The King Solomon turned to face the Holy of Holies and said: "The Lord said that He would dwell in the dense clouds. Here I have built Thee a house to dwell in, a settled place to abide in forever." Then the King and the people passed through the outer shrine into the courtyard where stood the sacrificial altar. The place shone in the mellow radiance shed by the gilded walls and pillars and the vessels of rare and costly metals. The priests conducted the holy rites of offering while the assistant Levites sang hymns to the accompaniment of their harps. The Israelites beheld the glory of their new temple with delight and awe, and the joyful festivities celebrating its dedication had lasted for many days when the last of the pilgrims returned to their homes.

§ 62.

External Splendor and Internal Misery Under Solomon.

When the building of the "House of God" had been duly accomplished, a house for the king was the builders' next task, and a luxurious palace arose under the hands of the Phoenician craftsmen. Situated at a considerable distance from the temple, it consisted of several buildings connected with each other by passage-ways. A long avenue of cedars called "the forest of Lebanon," led up to the palace and was guarded with unremitting vigilance by the King's bodyguard armed with swords and golden shields. The King's throne, which was of ivory, ornamented with gold, stood in the "hall of justice," where Solomon held his court, settled the disputes of his subjects and received the ambassadors of foreign nations. Adjoining the main building on either side were the residences of the King and of the chief Queen, the Pharaoh's daughter, and her attendants. Jerusalem was made beautiful with many other buildings besides the temple and the royal palace. These were the houses of citizens of great wealth, and soon the capital of the kingdom of Israel became a brilliant and splendid city to which, during the yearly festivals of Passover and Succoth the people came from

all over the land for worship and sacrifice in the new temple, while its importance as a commercial center grew continually, and representative foreigners came from many far countries to visit the famous temple and other places of interest.

One day the Queen of Sheba, which is in Southern Arabia, arrived in Jerusalem with a vast retinue. She had heard much of Solomon's remarkable wisdom and was desirous of seeing for herself how true were the reports she had heard. The King gave her a cordial welcome and answered all the questions and riddles she put to him, and when their long interview came to an end, the Queen was so enraptured with his wisdom that she cried: "O King, your wisdom and riches are greater far than I had been led to believe. How happy are your subjects that they can always have audience of such a King and of so wise a man." And she then gave him the gifts she had brought, much gold and many jewels and fragrant spices. Solomon gave her princely gifts in return and she left Jerusalem and went back to her own country.

Towards the end of Solomn's reign, it was clear to all that behind the great pomp and splendor on the surface, the people of Israel were neither happy nor contented. The outward opulence of the kingdom was costing too

much; merchants and traders were deriving vast fortunes from the rapid commercial development of the country, but the populace as a whole, especially in the agricultural sections, were plunged in poverty and want. The building of the temple had monopolized all the available workers for so long that labor was crippled and the working classes groaned under the weight of taxes permanently imposed for the maintenance of the King and his court. The kingdom had been divided into twelve districts, each of which, for one month in the year, had to furnish the entire requirement of food-stuffs for the royal household and the court officials. The prodigality of the court grew steadily worse and the tax-ridden subjects protested in vain against the economic oppression that overwhelmed them.

For a man of his wisdom, Solomon should have proved a ruler of sounder judgment than this, but he seemed not to realize the state of his kingdom and continued to live undisturbed amidst the luxury and the extravagance typical of the courts of oriental potentates, with many Egyptian, Moabite and Phoenician wives exceedingly costly to support. His marriage-alliances with these various foreign powers naturally opened the way for Phoenicians and other aliens to settle in Jerusalem. They established their own religions in the city, building

with impunity altars to whatever heathen gods they worshipped, and even the King himself would often attend the religious ceremonies with his foreign wives in their own temples, a circumstance which had so demoralizing an effect upon the popular mind that the country stood in grave danger of returning to the idolatrous practices of the past.

Of all Solomon's entourage, only the prophets were bold enough to reproach the King for the wrong he was doing, and they repeatedly prophesied the imminent collapse of his kingdom. Signs of its approaching downfall soon became evident. One of the King's officials, an Ephraimite named Jeroboam, saw how he might profit by the Ephraimites' growing discontent by inciting them to rebellion, and one day when he met the prophet Ahijah in a field, the prophet asked him for his cloak which he tore into twelve pieces. Ten of the pieces he returned to Jeroboam saying: "Take these ten pieces; they signify that ten tribes of Israel will break their allegiance to the house of David and choose you for their King." Emboldened by this prophecy, Jeroboam made open preparations to rise against Solomon, but his plot was found out and the news carried to the King who sent out soldiers to kill the rebel leader. Jeroboam fled to Egypt where he remained until Solomon's death.

§ 63.

The Fall of the Kingdom.

Solomon died, having reigned for almost forty years, and his eldest son Rehoboam was expected to ascend the throne. This prince was not endowed with any brilliant qualities, being possessed neither of David's courage nor of Solomon's wisdom. The tribe of Judah and part of the tribe of Benjamin, loyal to the dynasty of David, were willing to proclaim him King, but the other tribes, particularly the Ephraimites, demurred. Hearing that Solomon had died, Jeroboam returned to his own country from his refuge in Egypt and endeavored to fan the flame of Ephraimite hostility to David's house.

The elders of Israel with Rehoboam assembled in the Ephraimite city of Shechem to discuss the recognition of the new King, and there the people, still suffering under the taxation they had endured in the late reign, decided to demand relief at the hands of Rehoboam. Led by Jeroboam their representatives appeared before Solomon's son and said: "Your father laid a heavy burden upon us; relieve us of this load and we will serve you." The haughty Rehoboam took great offence at their demand, but promised to give them an answer in three days. Thereupon he summoned his counsellors and asked their opinions on the case: the elder

officials who had been in the service of the late King, advised Rehoboam to do as the people asked and reduce their taxes, but the younger ones, eager to flatter the proud and ambitious King, advised him to refuse. And it was their advice that Rehoboam took, so that when the people's spokesmen returned for their answer when the three days were up, he showed them neither mercy nor justice. "My father laid a heavy burden upon you," he said, "but I am going to make it heavier still. He flogged you with whips, but I shall scourge you with scorpions." This tyrant's speech so enraged the Ephraimites that they shouted: "The descendants of David shall be no kings of ours. Israelites, return to your tents."

When Jeroboam had come out openly as leader of the rebels, Rehoboam sent his chief tax-collector to the Ephraimites in an attempt to pacify them. But they were thoroughly aroused and stoned the hated emissary to death. Rehoboam himself only escaped with his life by leaping into a chariot and hastening back to Jerusalem as fast as the horses could carry him.

Then ten tribes of Israel, the Ephraimites, the tribes of the north and of Transjordania, proclaimed Jeroboam their king, leaving only the Judeans and some of the Benjamites still loyal to the house of David and Rehoboam.

As soon as Rehoboam reached Jerusalem he gathered a large army of these followers and was about to declare war upon the seceding tribes when the prophet Shemiah, "the man of God," spoke to him and his people, saying: "Do not make war upon your brethren, the sons of Israel, but return to your homes, for it was the will of the Lord that all these things should come to pass." So the army was disbanded and the soldiers returned to their homes.

Thus the great kingdom of David and Solomon became divided into two parts: the smaller called the kingdom of Judea, ruled over by a king of David's house, and the larger, variously called the Ephraimite kingdom, the Israelite kingdom and the kingdom of the ten tribes, whose first ruler was Jeroboam the Ephraimite.

CHAPTER IX

The Kingdoms of Judea and Israel During the First Century After the Death of Solomon. (977-830 B. C.)

§ 64.

Jeroboam and Rehoboam.

THE division of Solomon's kingdom into two parts finally destroyed the unity of the Hebrew people, and it was as though two quite distinct nations formed the new kingdoms, the Judeans on the one hand and the Israelites on the other. The ten northern tribes which composed the Israelitish nation which was the larger of the two, drifted farther and farther from the Judean tribes of the southern kingdom, and with their secession the customs and manners of both nations, always widely different, began to lose what little they had formerly had in common. Until that time two powerful bonds had kept all the tribes together, the rule of David's dynasty and the foregathering in the holy temple of Jerusalem which was the center of the people's religious life. The first of these ties

was broken when the ten tribes withdrew their allegiance from David's grandson in favor of Jeroboam, and very soon afterwards the second tie was broken too, for the seceding tribes worshipped no more in the temple at Jerusalem but built their own temples instead.

While Rehoboam, the King of Judea, lived in Jerusalem, Jeroboam, the King of the ten tribes made his capital in the Ephraimite city of Shechem. Jeroboam doubtful of the security of his new position and fearing that if his subjects retained the custom of going to Jerusalem to worship their God they might while there be prevailed upon to join the followers of Rehoboam, the rightful ruler over the whole nation, planned to tear them entirely away from the sanctuary in the Judean capital. He very well knew that the common people preferred to have some tangible image of their God to which they might address their prayers, and that they liked also to have their temples close to their homes in groves or upon some nearby hilltop, so he had two images of the God of Israel cast in gold and these he placed in two cities which thereby acquired and kept a holy character for many years, Beth-El in the north and Dan in the south. The golden figures were in the form of calves, Jeroboam's idea being no doubt to imitate the Egyptian custom of representing deities in the form of bulls (Apis),

and when the idols had been duly made, Jeroboam said to his assembled people: "You need not go to Jerusalem to worship any more, for here are the images of your God who led the Israelites out of Egypt." Most of them gladly attended the new temples, but the priestly tribe of Levites refused to hold services there and Jeroboam was therefore obliged to appoint laymen to officiate in their stead.

Occasionally, on holidays of special importance, he himself conducted the rites at the shrine in Beth-El. He allowed other altars to be set upon various hilltops as had been done in the bygone days of the Judges, and in that way the ten tribes fell gradually more and more into heathen customs. The deterioration of the true religion drove the Levites and many pious laymen out of the kingdom back to Jerusalem where they became the subjects of Rehoboam.

Rehoboam, King of Judea, had inherited many of his father's bad traits and none of his good ones. While he remained on the throne his country knew no peace; he maintained an unceasing war against Jeroboam throughout his reign, and five years after he succeeded his father, Judea suffered a disastrous invasion of Egyptians led by Shishak their King, who, at the head of countless warriors, reached Jerusalem after seizing several fortified cities on his way. In his greed for as much plunder

as his army could carry away, Shishak possessed himself of all the treasures of the temple and of the royal palace before he finally went back the way he had come. Rehoboam survived this invasion twelve years and died in the year 960 B. C., and in 955 B. C. Jeroboam followed him, having reigned twenty-two years.

After Jeroboam's death, Israel entered upon a period of turbulence during which king succeeded king as soon as each new pretender to the throne could accomplish the murder of the one in possession. Within twenty-five years no less than four, each belonging to a different dynasty, had occupied the seat of Jeroboam, Nadab, Baasha, Elah and Zimri. This unending internal strife completely disrupted the country and left it too weak to cope with any outside danger that might threaten. Asa, the king of Judea, saw how matters stood and seizing his advantage, successfully invaded many cities of the Kingdom of Israel. It was not until many years later that the era of civil war came to an end with the reign of Omri, who re-established order in the land and became the founder of a new dynasty, 928 B. C.

§ 65.

Omri and Ahab.

Omri, the fifth king of Israel after Jeroboam built himself a new capital near Shechem,

the former capital, and called it Samaria. (927 B. C.) For two centuries Samaria remained the chief city of the kingdom, in fact the kingdom was often called by the name of the capital, and Omri called the first king of Samaria. He tried hard to create peace and order out of chaos in which the country had been left by the wars, and began not by attacking Judea as his predecessors had done, but by inviting the king to enter into an alliance with him in order that together they might be the better enabled to repel invasion from without. The peace between the two kindred nations gained strength during the reigns of Omri's immediate successors. At the same time as he was negotiating with Judea, Omri made another peace treaty of the utmost importance to the Hebrew people, for it brought the rulers of the neighboring kingdom of Phoenicia into friendly relations with Samaria, and the alliance was further cemented by the marriage of Omri's son Ahab to Jezebel, daughter of the king and priest of Tyre, the Phoenician capital. Thereupon the Phoenicians began to settle freely in the land of Israel, with the result that trade and industry received tremendous impetus, but their introduction into the kingdom was not without its disadvantages. The heathen customs and religious practices they brought with them exercised a pernicious influence on the native Israel-

ites, which counterbalanced the material benefits of their presence in the land.

Omri, having secured the friendship of Judea and Phoenicia, turned his attention on his enemies and declared war upon his eastern neighbors, the Moabites, seizing several of their cities. Evidence of this war exists in the inscription upon a recently discovered stone tablet of Meshah, the Moabite king, who lived in the IXth century B. C. The conquest of the Moabites reduced them to the position of a vassal and tributary people. Then Ben-Haded, the king of Aramea or Damascus, declared war upon the Israelites, and Omri, unable to withstand the force of their attack, was obliged to accept the exceedingly harsh peace terms Ben-Haded offered. These terms included the recognition of Aramaic merchants' right to halt their caravans in Samaria and other cities in Israel.

Some years after founding Samaria, Omri died, leaving his son Ahab to succeed him. (922-901 B. C.) During this reign the kingdom reached an unprecedented degree of outward glory. Ahab maintained friendly relations with the Phoenicians, whom he imitated in many ways. He built himself a magnificent new palace in the valley of Jezreel, called by the people "the house of ivory." Phoenician customs and manners were gradually overspreading the kingdom together with heathen beliefs and the idol-

atrous practices which the spirit of the Hebrew religion so strenuously opposed. These influences were largely due to the efforts of Ahab's Phoenician wife, Jezebel, a woman of unlimited ambition and great force of character. Daughter of a heathen priest of Tyre, Queen Jezebel determined to introduce the religion and mundane splendors of her native land into her husband's kingdom. She surrounded herself with a throng of Phoenician priests and priestesses and in compliance with her wishes, Ahab built a great temple to Baal, the Tyrian God of the Sun. The sacred tree with its altar in honor of the goddess Ashtaroth, grew near by, and several hundred priests were employed in the temple offices. In Samaria, as everywhere else in the kingdom, heathen altars stood side by side with the altars of Jehovah, and the people worshipped at all impartially, not realizing anything incongruous in their doing so. Only a very few preserved the religion of Jehovah in its integrity and refused to participate in the godless innovations of the Phoenicians.

Pious men, faithful to the teachings of Moses, came forward from time to time and in fiery speeches denounced the error and immorality of idolatry. These preachers and instructors of the people were known as the "prophets of Jehovah," to distinguish them from the heathen priests who were called the "prophets of Baal."

Queen Jezebel persecuted them with intense cruelty and issued orders that no defender of the ancient Hebrew faith should be allowed to live. Many were put to death and others fled and hid themselves in caves and mountain passes where their followers brought them food secretly. Obadiah, the supervisor of the King's court, sheltered one hundred prophets in a cave and provided them with bread and water, though he was careful to hide the fact from the other court officials.

§ 66.

Elijah, the Prophet.

Among Jehovah's prophets who were saved from the wrath of Jezebel was a man divinely inspired named Elijah, a native of the city of Tishbi in Gilead. The lawlessness and depravity that he saw on every side stirred his upright soul to infinite anger and every now and then he would appear in Samaria and loudly denounce both King and people for their wickedness. Then he would seek refuge in the wilderness from the persecution which always followed his outbursts.

Elijah's appearance and mode of life made him a conspicuous figure wherever he went: he always wore a shirt of sackcloth, never cut his hair, touched neither meat nor wine and openly and on every possible occasion declared his pro-

found aversion for the pleasures and comforts of life. Many of the people believed him a saint and capable therefore of performing miracles; it was said that once when he had fled into hiding to a desolate region on the shores of the Jordan, ravens carried food to him morning and evening, and he was also reputed to have restored to life the son of a poor widow in whose house he once stayed when the young man was all but dead of a wasting disease.

His saintly reputation conferred upon Elijah the privilege of telling his bitter truths to the King himself, and he often did so. The first quarrel between the two occurred as follows:

A beautiful vineyard belonging to a man named Naboth adjoined Ahab's palace on one side and the King, wishing to make a garden all round the palace, asked Naboth to sell him his vineyard for that purpose. But Naboth refused, saying that those vines were his most cherished possession, having come down to him through many generations of his family. This refusal so enraged the king that he could not eat or sleep until he had deprived Naboth of the coveted piece of land. Seeing how the matter stood, Jezebel, the crafty queen, then bribed two of her servants to bring a lying accusation against Naboth, alleging that he had been heard to curse both God and the King. He was brought to trial for the pretended crime, sentenced to

death and executed, and his lovely vineyard was seized by Ahab. When Elijah heard of this wicked deed, he sought out the king in his palace and said to him: "You have killed a man and stolen his property. Hear now what Jehovah has said: In the same spot where dogs have licked the blood of Naboth, dogs shall lick Ahab's blood and the blood of his family." And with this dire prophecy, the prophet departed. At first the king suffered the pangs of remorse but in a little while he had entirely forgotten Elijah's words and the incident that had prompted them.

Shortly afterwards, the land of Samaria was visited by a great calamity; no rain fell for three whole years, the grain in the fields could not ripen and the people saw starvation staring them in the face. One day the king met Elijah upon the road and said to him: "Is it you who are the cause of all this disaster in Israel?" "It is not I," answered the prophet, "but you and your family, for you have broken the Lord's commandments and given yourselves over to Baal." Elijah then tried to reason with Ahab, showing him how, if he would deliver his people from the terrors of famine, he must first soften the heart of Jehovah towards them by turning from their evil ways. "Let me summon together all the priests of Baal upon Mount Carmel," Elijah begged the King, "and there

I will try and prove before the whole of Israel which is the true God, Jehovah or Baal." And Ahab consented.

All the priests of Baal, to the number of four hundred and fifty, assembled upon the mountain together with a vast multitude of the people. Ahab and Elijah were also there, and saw to the placing of two altars side by side, one for Jehovah and the other for Baal. Then Elijah said to the priests of Baal: "Let us take two bullocks, one of which you shall kill and lay upon your altar, but do not kindle the wood beneath. I shall do likewise with the other bullock and also not kindle the wood. Then you shall pray to your gods and call upon them and I shall call upon the Lord; and whichever of our Gods kindles the wood for his own burnt-offering shall be accepted by all as the true God." The priests agreed to this test and did as Elijah bade them; then from morning until noon they cried in loud voices: "Hear us, O Baal." But no fire set light to the faggots upon their altar. Then Elijah taunted them, saying: "Call him louder, your god; call him louder. He may be busy or absent or asleep; call him louder so that he may wake." Shriller and more desperate rang the voices of the priests who at last began to dance and leap wildly about the altar; in their frenzy they tore their robes and the flesh beneath until blood flowed

from their wounds yet Baal neither heard them nor answered.

Then Elijah laid his offering upon the altar of Jehovah and prayed: "Lord God of Israel, Isaac and Abraham, let all these people know that Thou art God, and that I am Thy servant who had done this in Thy name. Hear me, O Lord, hear me." No sooner had he uttered these words than a dense cloud darkened the sky and a dazzling flash of lightning struck the altar, setting fire to the wood and the bullock upon it. When the people beheld this proof of the true God, they fell upon the priests of Baal and in their fury slew them all. The dark cloud gathered and broke, and rain fell in torrents upon the earth, refreshing the fields and reviving the dying crops. Then King Ahab was moved to repent before Elijah and make his peace with him, but the bloodthirsty queen who had heard of the revelation upon Mount Carmel and the massacre of her priests, vowed that she would have the prophet put to death for what he had done to the servants of Baal. So Elijah fled to Judea and thence into the desert where he travelled for many days and nights and at last reached the sacred mountain of Horeb (Sinai).

The legend tells how, sleeping one night in a cave near Horeb, Elijah heard the voice of God asking: "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

And the prophet answered: "Jehovah, I have been your faithful servant but the children of Israel have forsaken your covenant, destroyed your altars and slain your prophets." Then God said to him: "Rise up and go upon the mountain." And Elijah did so. A terrific storm then broke over Sinai, the mountain swayed and rocked and almost collapsed, but Jehovah did not appear while the tempest lasted. Thunder crashed and the sky was torn with lightning, but still there was no sign of the Lord's presence before His prophet. At last the tumult ceased and quietness and peace reigned once more; a light breeze stirred in the air, and only then did Elijah feel that God was upon the mountain. By this symbol he understood that God was not to be sought in the midst of strife and bloodshed but in the peaceful and industrious conduct of life.

§ 67.

The Aramaic Wars.

Throughout the last years of his reign, Ahab was at war with the Arameans. Their king, Ben-Haded II, whose capital was in Damascus, was one of the most powerful rulers of the East, with his vast army and numerous horses and chariots of war. All the petty neighboring kings paid him annual tribute and Ben-Haded also coveted the kingdom of Israel. He

therefore marched upon the land of Ahab at the head of his formidable hosts and besieged Samaria, the capital, demanding the voluntary recognition of his sovereignty under penalty of attack. Ahab called his elders together, and upon their advice, refused to fall in with Ben-Haded's demands, whereupon the Aramean king cried furiously: "I swear that the earth of all Samaria shall not be enough for my warriors, for they shall take it away in handfuls." And Ahab sent him the following answer: "Not the one who puts on a girdle (before a battle), but the one that takes it off (after it) should boast."

At the head of a small but courageous army, Ahab attacked the Arameans in their camp, while their king was feasting with his allies, and, taking them unawares, put them to flight. Ben-Haded saved his life by jumping on a horse that bore him swiftly away. The Arameans' second attempt to conquer Israel a year later, ended more disastrously still, for Ben-Haded's army was cut to pieces and he himself surrendered to Ahab, imploring mercy. Ahab spared his enemy's life and set him free but only on condition that he returned to Israel all the cities he and his predecessors had conquered in the past. Ben-Haded no sooner found himself at liberty than he forgot his promise and made no attempt to restore the

conquered cities, so Ahab, having first enlisted the aid of his ally, the king of Judea, decided to end the Aramean trouble once and for all. The allied armies set out for the city of Ramoth in Gilead, prepared to annihilate the perfidious enemy.

The king of Judea at that time was Jehosophat, a great-grandson of Rehoboam and son of Asa. (918-815.) Under his rule the country had grown rich and powerful; he had built many fortresses and increased the army, and neighboring tribes such as the Arabs and the Edomites paid him tribute. The maintenance of the true religion and the cultivation of good morals among his subjects were Jehosophat's chief cares and he had the Levites instruct the people in the religious laws which had been preserved in sacred books or handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth since the days of the patriarchs. But the spirit of absolute faith had not yet come to dominate the popular mind; many refused to worship in the temple of Jerusalem and continued to attend their own services at altars on hilltops in the manner of heathens. Jehosophat, himself, though a man of intense piety, was on terms of friendship with the godless king Ahab, even to the extent of having cemented the alliance of the two kingdoms by marrying his son Jehoram to Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jez-

ebel. When Ahab proposed joining forces with Jehosophat against the Arameans, the king of Judea assured him of his willingness, saying: "My people are your people and my horses your horses." Jehosophat himself departed for Samaria and the two kings made their preparations for the war together. The court prophets, eager to ingratiate themselves, predicted their success, but one Micaiah, a prophet of Jehovah, whose uprightness and regard for truth nothing could corrupt, answered Jehosophat who consulted him as to the outcome of the war: "I see all the Israelites scattered over the hills like sheep without a shepherd," which ominous prophecy so enraged Ahab that he ordered Micaiah to be cast into prison.

The allied armies, led by their respective kings, started out towards Ramoth where a fierce engagement took place. The archers of Ben-Haded had orders to concentrate their attack upon King Ahab, but he had taken the precaution of disguising himself. His care, however, availed him nothing, for he was struck by an enemy arrow while standing in his chariot. He was carried, mortally wounded, from the battlefield, and bled to death the same evening. When they saw their king fall, the allied soldiers cried: "Let every man of us go back to his own country and to his own city." And Jehosophat too returned to Jeru-

salem, while Ahab's body was taken home to Samaria in his blood-stained chariot. As servants were washing the chariot in a pool near the palace, dogs came by and licked up the blood of the dead king. Thus the prophecy Elijah had made many years before fulfilled itself, for the pool was in the very spot where Naboth, the owner of the stolen vineyard, had been executed by order of the king.

§ 68.

The Children of Ahab: Elisha, the Prophet.

A few years after Ahab, Elijah also died, but not before appointing a successor to carry on his work of reform in Israel. This successor was a young peasant named Elisha, and Elijah came to him one day as he was ploughing his father's field with a pair of oxen, and threw his mantle over Elisha's shoulders in token of his dedication to the service of God as a prophet. Then Elisha followed Elijah and became his disciple and servant. After the death of his great teacher, Elisha lived for some time in solitude near Mount Carmel, but events in the kingdom of Israel compelled him at last to take his part in public life for the sake of the country.

Elisha's activities began during the reign of the new King, Joram, son of Ahab. Joram did not try to abolish either idolatry or any of

the other undesirable practices which had taken deep root in the lives of the people during his father's reign. The king's mother, Jezebel, was still alive and wielding her powerful influence over the kingdom's affairs. The whole twelve years of Joram's reign were spent in wars with the Moabites and Arameans.

At that time the kingdom of Judea was travelling the same road towards deterioration as Israel, for Jehosophat's son and successor, Jehoram, was as wax in the hands of his wife Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. This queen fought as violently to establish Phoenician customs in Jerusalem as did Jezebel, her mother, in Samaria, and when Jehoram died, leaving his son, Ahaziah, a mere child, to succeed him, Judea was practically delivered into the hands of the queen-regent whom the young king implicitly obeyed.

Elisha regarded with deep sorrow the decline of morals in the land. He realized that so long as the descendants of Ahab kept the throne, the Israelites would never break away from heathen customs and religions, and he therefore planned to bring about a change in the state which would lead to the fall of Ahab's house in Israel.

War between the Arameans and the Israelites had broken out again, and both armies were encamped near Ramoth-Gilead, where a

great battle was fought. Joram, king of Israel, was severely wounded by an arrow during the fight and went to Jezreel to recover, leaving the army in charge of one of his leaders, named Jehu, an ambitious and determined man, in whom the prophet Elisha saw his tool for the destruction of Ahab's dynasty.

§ 69.

The End of the House of Ahab.

As Jehu, the chief of the Israelitish army, lay in camp near Ramoth, Elisha sent one of his disciples to him with a secret message. The messenger found him surrounded by his captains and calling him apart, he led him towards a distant tent. There he took a vessel filled with oil and, anointing Jehu's head, said: "In the name of the Lord, I proclaim you King of Israel. Destroy the wicked family of Ahab and avenge the blood of the prophets that they have shed." When Jehu returned to his captains and told them what had occurred, they blew their horns and cried: "Jehu has succeeded to the throne of Israel." The army followed its leaders in recognizing Jehu as their king and he then took troops into Jezreel to depose King Joram.

Joram's convalescence was being enlivened by the visit of Ahaziah, his nephew and king of Judea, and when they saw the chief of

Joram's army approaching in the distance, they took chariots and went out to meet him. When they were still some way off Joram called out: "Is all well, Jehu?" But Jehu answered the king harshly, saying: "How should anything be well so long as a villainous witch like your mother is queen?" Then Joram guessed the sinister object of Jehu's appearance in Jezreel. "Ahaziah, treason!" he cried, and turned his chariot to flee, but an arrow from Jehu's bow sped after them, and Joram fell dead. Ahaziah was mortally wounded but reached the city of Megiddo before he too succumbed. When Jehu had thus disposed of Joram, he went to the palace in Jezreel where Jezebel, the king's mother, was living. Seeing him from a window of the palace, she called out: "Look where the regicide comes." Then Jehu, in a rage, ordered the royal servants to drag the queen out on the street, and there horses' feet trampled her to death. Jehu sent orders into Samaria for the slaying of every remaining member of Ahab's family. When these, numbering some seventy men and women had all been put to death, Jehu, his terrible act of vengeance accomplished, entered Samaria as king.

He at once began the task of abolishing the worship of Baal in his kingdom, and to that end he pretended to be himself an idolator. "Ahab served Baal a little, but Jehu will serve him

much," he declared, and summoned all the priests and followers of Baal into their temple. They came in all their vast numbers, unsuspecting, but as soon as the temple was filled, Jehu set guards about the building to cut off all escape, while his own bodyguards slew everyone inside. When this was done, the king's servants dragged the image of Baal out of the temple and burned it. The temple, the altar and all the other heathen effigies it contained were totally destroyed and Baal and his worshippers were reduced to a heap of ashes. (886 B. C.) The worship of Phoenician idols was prohibited throughout the country, but the golden calves in Beth-El and Dan were kept as in the time of Jeroboam, for the common people prayed to them as images of Jehovah.

§ 70.

Athaliah.

While Jehu was so cruelly exterminating Ahab's descendants in the kingdom of Israel, Athalia, the daughter of Ahab, still ruled in Judea. The slaying of her son Ahaziah in Jezreel, provoked her to an act of frightful vengeance in Jerusalem; she ordered the massacre of David's descendants in Jerusalem and ruled the country like a tyrant. Her reign lasted for six years, during which time she filled the Judean capital with images of Baal and

Ashtaroth, and built a separate altar for the former, where a Levite named Mattan officiated as priest. Many influential families of Judea supported the queen and were idolators as she was, but the better people of the country bitterly opposed her rule of violence, and the state of chaos into which she was plunging the country.

The leader of the malcontents was the High-Priest Jehoiada, whose wife was Jehosheba, a sister of the murdered king Ahaziah. While Athaliah's servants were killing the members of the king's family, Jehosheba saved Ahaziah's little son, Joash, by hiding him with his nurse in one of the chambers of Solomon's temple. The boy grew up under the guardianship of his uncle, the High-Priest, who was the supervisor of the temple at that time. When the child was seven years old, Jehoiada planned to set him on the throne to which he was the rightful heir, and he enlisted the assistance of the military leaders of Jerusalem in a move to depose the queen. One Saturday, he sent secret instructions to the guards to surround the temple and not admit any of the queen's followers. Then he brought the little Joash from the inner chamber of the temple, put a crown on his head and proclaimed him king of Judea while the guards surrounding the temple outside, blew their trumpets and shout-

ed: "Long live the king." Hearing this commotion, Athaliah hastened to the temple and there she saw a small boy with a crown upon his head; then she understood that she had been betrayed, and the courtyard rang with her cries of treason. But the High-Priest ordered his guards to take her from the temple to her palace and there put her to death. (880 B. C.)

§ 71.

The Dynasty of Jehu in Samaria and the Kings of Judea.

The bloody prelude to the new reigns in Samaria and Jerusalem, ushered in no era of peace for either country. Jehu's reign, which lasted twenty-eight years, (887-860 B. C.) was an unbroken period of disaster for the people of Israel. Aramean invaders from the kingdom of Damascus devastated the land beyond the Jordan and enslaved the people. During the reign of Jehu's son, Jehoahaz (860-845 B. C.), things went from bad to worse. The Arameans penetrated even into the territory west of the Jordan, so greatly reducing the country's military strength that nothing remained of the Samarian army but a mere ten thousand foot-soldiers, fifty horsemen and ten chariots of war. Jehoahaz's son, Jehoash, however, succeeded in considerably reviving the kingdom's feeble strength when he defeated the Arameans

near Aphek and reconquered many of the cities they had taken (845-830 B. C.) Elisha, the prophet, lived to predict this last victory, then died, being very old and infirm. Like Elijah, Elisha was remembered by the people as a saint and a performer of miracles. His great merit, however, was the untiring energy with which he struggled against the Phoenician idolatry which Elijah had begun to uproot from Israel, and this task Elisha, his faithful disciple, duly accomplished.

The High-Priest, Jehoiada, tutor and guardian of King Joash, made heroic efforts to strengthen the hold of the true religion upon the people. The young king remained an example of piety as long as Jehoiada lived, helping the priests in their work of restoring certain parts of the great temple of Jerusalem that had fallen into disrepair, and causing collections to be made for this purpose all over his kingdom. But after Jehoiada's death, relations between king and priests became strained because he resented their claim to take part in the affairs of state which he considered outside their province. In the course of a dispute between Joash and Zachariah, the son of Jehoiada, the latter threatened Joash with the wrath of God and the angry king ordered the guards to kill him in the courtyard of the temple. As he died Zachariah said: "The Lord look

upon it and require it." This cruel action stirred the indignation of the influential families of Jerusalem and as a result of a conspiracy to kill Joash, two of his courtiers murdered him in his bed in the year 843 B. C.

Joash's son and successor, Amaziah (843-815 B. C.) had his father's assassins executed. The new king who was famous for his warlike spirit, spent much of his life upon the battlefield. He declared war against the Edomites, who had refused to submit any longer to Judea. Their inaccessible mountains afforded them powerful protection, but Amaziah penetrated even into those almost impassable fastnesses and defeated them in a battle near Salt Valley. Then Amaziah sent a challenge to Jehoash, the king of Israel, but the latter answered: "You defeated the Edomites and are vain of your success. You would be better advised to stay at home now and not seek trouble for yourself and Judea." Amaziah took no heed of this warning but declared war against the king of Israel; and in the battle that ensued near Beth-Shemesh, he was taken prisoner and the Judean army defeated. The Israelites surrounded and destroyed part of the

city wall. Jehoash demanded a large ransom for the Judean king and as soon as he had received it, he set Amaziah free. The Judeans were enraged against Amaziah for having so recklessly provoked the war and Jerusalem rose in rebellion. He fled to Lachish, but the rebels overtook him there and put him to death. The heir to the throne, Uzziah, being still a very young child, the country was ruled by court officials for several years.

CHAPTER X

The Religious and Social Life and Customs of the Hebrews During the Epoch of the Dual Kingdoms.

§ 72.

Home Life.

EVER since the conquest of Canaan had made the Hebrews a settled people, agriculture had been their principal occupation, only those who lived in Transjordania and in some parts of Judea having remained cattle-breeders. The cultivation of his own field, garden or vineyard was considered a man's natural vocation and the Israelite's fondest dream was "to sit under his own vine and under his own fig-tree." By patience and tireless labor the harsh Palestine soil had been made to blossom into a veritable garden of loveliness. Plains and valleys were covered with wheat and barley fields, the hillsides were green with vineyards, gardens and olive-groves. Farming, gardening and vine-growing were the exclusive occupations of the whole nation, not only in the country but in

the cities as well. This uniformity of vocation levelled all class-distinctions that might have tended to separate the man of the people from the holder of some exalted position, and the modest farmer from the influential public man. King Saul, until his accession to the throne, had ploughed his father's fields and his was a noble Benjamite family; David was a shepherd and Elisha, the prophet, a farmer like the rest.

The grain ripened in Palestine about the beginning of spring, and harvest-time came at the end; the vintage and ingathering of the threshed-out grain was done either at the end of summer or at the beginning of autumn. The religious festivals usually coincided with these events which held the most important place in the life of this people of agriculturists—Passover was the holiday of the ripening of the grain; Shebuoth, of harvesting; Succoth, of ingathering the grain and storing away the wine. During the epoch of the dual kingdoms, Passover appears to have been the only holiday that had its origin in the history and in the religion of the race, and the custom of eating unleavened bread (matzoth) at this season was of two-fold significance, symbolizing not only the early ripening of the grain but also the hasty exodus from Egypt when the Hebrews, according to the legend, had had no time to

wait for their bread to rise but had to use the dough unfermented as it was to make bread to sustain them on their wanderings in the desert.

The compulsory rest on the seventh day of each week, the Sabbath, was one of the most ancient laws of the Hebrew religion and greatly influenced the economic life of the people. One of the ancient laws of Moses says: Six days shalt thou labor and on the seventh thou shalt rest, that thine ox and thine ass may rest also and the son of thy handmaid and the stranger be refreshed." And again he said: "Six days thou shalt work but on the seventh day thou shalt rest: in earing time and in harvest thou shalt rest."

The idea of rest on the Sabbath had such a broad application that it included the very earth itself; the soil was to "rest" one year in every seven. "Six years," says the ancient law, "thou shalt sow thy land and gather the fruit thereof, but the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie fallow that the poor of thy people may eat, and what they leave the beasts of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard and thy oliveyard."

The origin of this law must be attributed to the physical peculiarities of the country and to the popular customs that sprang therefrom. Wherever agriculture was the main occupation,

the people led a simple and frugal life. Their houses were of wood and clay with flat roofs on which they slept during the hot season. The furniture was of the simplest, too, as described in the account of Elisha's visit to a family of means in whose house the guest-chamber contained only a bed, a table, a stool and a candlestick.

Wheat and barley bread, meal-cakes made with oil, vegetables and fruit were all their food. The farmer ate meat only on holidays when he brought a head of cattle to be killed as an offering for the altar in the temple; a part of the animal was burned on the altar or given to the priest, and the rest made a meal for the household. In the altar-cities where offerings were frequent, the people ate meat more often than the farmers. As time went on, the simplicity of their lives as agriculturists underwent a gradual change. Commerce began to rival agriculture and the days were gone when the Israelites had looked down upon trade as beneath their dignity, leaving it scornfully to the Canaanites and the Phoenicians whom it could not degrade, they being already "merchants with the scales of deceit in their hands." Whole communities found themselves forced by circumstances to become identified with various industrial and commercial occupations, and ever since the time of Solomon, the

kings themselves had been energetic in promoting trade of every kind, sending out caravans and ships to various foreign lands, sometimes with the help of the Phoenicians, sometimes independently. During the reigns of Shab and Josapath, trade flourished in both their kingdoms and as a result, new cities were constantly and rapidly arising. A new economic order was inaugurated on the basis of capital and labor, and the practices of money-changing, loans and usury became common. A person unable to pay his debts when they fell due might become his creditor's slave, just as the custom had obtained in the ancient world. Class distinctions became more and more definite, and the gulf widened between the rich and the poor. A few rich landowners concentrated in their own hands great estates and vast tracts of land, and private citizens of wealth built themselves houses of stone slabs and led lives of incredible luxury.

The prophets, who remained the people's incorruptible instructors, condemned the prevailing mode of life and fought against the growing influences for evil, beseeching Israel to reform, in the name of the laws of humanity and righteousness on which their religion was based. They quoted the patriarchal law against the usurers: If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to

him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury. If thou at all take thy neighbor's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down, for that is his covering only, it is his raiment for his skin; wherein shall he sleep? But the lofty principles preached by the prophets were found little adaptable to everyday life and all their impassioned sermons were powerless to prevent the Hebrew people from taking part in the international trade of the Orient.

The family life of the ancient Hebrews was in many respects superior to that of other nations. Polygamy was exceptional and monogamy had become the accepted form of family life. Only kings were allowed to have many wives, probably for the purpose of assuring and strengthening the dynasty, but even the kings, after Solomon, did not always avail themselves of their privilege. Men of wealth usually had but two wives and even then quarrels would often disturb the peace of the household, with the unloved wife envious of the loved one and the childless one envious of the other who had children. The man usually paid the marriage-money to the bride's parents before the marriage, as is the present custom with many Eastern tribes. In very ancient times, marriages between near relatives were not rare; for instance, it was permissible to marry one's

half-sister or cousin, or to marry two sisters, but later on such marriages were forbidden.

Parents had unlimited power over their children; an insult offered by word or deed to father or mother was punishable by death. The mother was held in equal respect with the father.

Though slavery was in vogue amongst the Hebrews, they treated their slaves with no such brutality as that with which other nations treated theirs. Both male and female slaves were looked upon as members of the family, and their rights were defined by law. A Hebrew slave was supposed to serve his master for six years only, at the end of which time his master had to set him free. If, when his period of service was over, the slave did not wish to leave, the law enjoined the master to perform the following ceremony: the slave stood upon the threshold of the house and the master pierced his ear as a token of his being bound to the house for the rest of his life. Slavery was not in most cases a state institution with the Hebrews as it was with the Greeks and Romans.

§ 73.

The State and Society.

Every freeman, upon reaching his majority, acquired full civil rights. The status

of foreigners (gerim) differed very little from that of natives. They enjoyed full protection under the law, and the Holy Book says more than once: "Thou shalt neither vex a stranger nor oppress him, for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." The same law commands kindness towards foreigners, comparing them to the defenseless members of the native community, to the poor, the widows and the orphans. Like these, they were to be permitted to glean in the fields of the wealthy after the harvest was done, and were entitled to receive certain donations.

Men of standing, or elders, usually served as judges in the cities. They sat in council in a square near the "city gates," that is, at the outskirts of the city, and there tried the cases that were brought to them, but the swearing-in was done at the altar in the temple. Priests and Levites also often served as judges, and criminal as well as civil cases were settled in the local courts, only the most important or intricate being appealed to the King.

The King was the chief of the army, the supreme ruler of the country and the ultimate justice. Originating in the tendency of the people towards unity for the purpose of defence against outside enemies, the kingly office was primarily military. (Cf. Saul and David.) The king was the head of the nation's militia but

maintained his own permanent troops and his personal bodyguard besides, which later on became the nucleus of a regular army of foot- and horse-soldiers. Next in importance to the kingship, was the position of commander of the army. Military duty was compulsory for every free citizen owning landed property. As the military strength of the state increased, so did the number of fortified garrison cities.

At the time of the Judges and of Samuel the Israelites had been obliged to seek refuge from their enemies in mountain caves and passes, but in the period of Kings, non-combatants found shelter within the walls of their citadels while the invasions lasted. The Israelite kings seldom provoked wars of territorial expansion, but were continually being drawn into defensive encounters with neighboring countries who perpetualy invaded their frontiers and annexed their lands.

The King's court was supported by special taxes paid in money or produce; there were also court holdings of land, the revenues from which contributed towards the maintenance of the royal state. Sometimes, in cases of military necessity, the kings took money from the treasury of the temple of Jerusalem where the savings of the people were held, just as they keep them nowadays in the savings banks.

Rehoboam, Asa and Amaziah all had at different times recourse to this measure.

The king was the judge of final appeal. The weak sought redress before him against the strong, the offended against the offender, and the unfair decisions of local judges were referred to the king for reversal. A great many criminal and civil laws of that epoch were founded upon the ancient customs of the people. The primitive practice of blood-vengeance, that is, the right of a relative of a murdered man to take the law into his own hands and kill the murderer, still survived, but was to a large extent modified by the law. If the murder had been an unpremeditated one, the murderer might find refuge in some temple, near the altar, or in certain "cities of refuge" designated for that purpose. But if the murder had been planned and deliberately executed, the avenger was free to seize the criminal even from the temple. As time passed, however, the obligation of vengeance was gradually transferred from the individual to society. Only in very rare instances did the court sentence follow the ancient rule of "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life." In most cases the guilty party paid a fine, according to his crime. Offences against the fundamental commandments of the religion, blasphemy and insult to the king were punishable by death; the most

ancient form of capital punishment was stoning, which was usually done outside the city walls and in which crowds of people would participate.

In all the kingdoms of the ancient world, the King was also the High-Priest. The Hebrew kings also now and then assumed the High-Priest's duties, though the title was usually only an honorary one, but on occasion, as "God's anointed," Saul and David too brought offerings in person to the temple for ceremonies of special solemnity. Later on, the honorary title of High-Priest was retained only by the Kings of the Ten Tribes who inhabited Samaria. Jeroboam I made priesthood a state institution; the temple in Beth-El was regarded as the King's property and the priests were state officials. But in Judea the priests did not recognize the right of the king to be called the High-Priest, and once King Uzziah aroused widespread indignation when he presumed to perform the duties of a priest in the temple of Jerusalem.

§ 74.

Religious Life.

Religious services, with all their external pomp and ceremony occupied the first place in the religion of the ancient Hebrews. The principal religious center of Judea was Jerusalem, the capital, and of Samaria, a city on its

southern border, called Beth-El. In both kingdoms, besides these main centers there were also lesser places of worship. In the smaller cities of Judea many altars were built "on the heights," but no temples of the dimensions or magnificence of the temple of Jerusalem to which each year in the holiday seasons multitudes repaired.

In the kingdom of Israel or Samaria there were temples of Jehovah in the capital and in Gilgal, Dan and other cities as well, besides the original temple built in Beth-El by the King. The custom of holding services at the altars "on the heights" and in groves was far more general in Samaria than in Judea and bore a closer resemblance to the heathen forms of worship. The country altars built on hilltops were nothing but heaps of stones, as also were those found in groves under the shade of oak, palm or tamarisk. Where there were no large trees, an artificial tree, in the form of a pillar, wider at the top than at the base, was set up near the altar. Golden images of Jehovah, in the form of a bull, were usually placed in the temples of Israel, and even in Jerusalem. Before the reign of Hezekiah, the image of a serpent cast in brass, symbolic of a deity who cured diseases, was an object of popular worship.

The religious ceremonies consisted mainly of prayer and sacrificial offerings. Primitive man

sought the favor of God by means of gifts and entreaty. With the Hebrews, as with the ancient Greeks, the offering had a symbolic significance also: the flesh of the animal, part of which was burned upon the altar, thereby became purified and fit for human consumption. All the blood was poured out upon the altar because the Israelites were forbidden to eat flesh while any blood still remained in it.

Wine and oil were also poured upon the altar which represented the hearth of God, and family gatherings, held within a certain distance of the holy shrine, assumed, by reason of this propinquity, the character of religious ceremonies. On important holidays such gatherings were especially solemn. During the Passover, the firstlings of sheep and oxen were brought to the altar and their flesh eaten with the traditional unleavened bread. At the summer "holiday of the harvest," the flesh of such animals was eaten with leavened bread, and all kinds of fruit and the branches of palm-trees were carried into the temple at the autumn festival. At these festivals the people all joined in merrymaking about the temple and altars; every family of means invited the poor, and the widowed, the orphan and the stranger to their tables, and with eating and drinking, they all made merry "before Jehovah," and thus agricultural holidays were transformed into religious celebrations.

The central figure at the altar or in the temple was the priest who performed the ceremony of sacrifice. A share of the burnt-offering was his perquisite and he received from the worshippers additional gifts in the form of field produce and wine. The amount of such gifts was later on defined by the law. The office of the High-Priest descended from father to son and according to ancient tradition, all the Hebrew priests traced their descent from Moses's brother, Aaron, of the tribe of Levi. They called themselves Aaronites or Cohanim. In the kingdom of Israel, however, after the religious upheavals that took place under the rule of Jeroboam, many of the priests were not descendants of Aaron.

During the period of the Judges, the priests often assumed the character of prophets or mouthpieces of God, in addition to their function as teachers of the people, but later on the work of instruction was taken over by the real prophets who became the permanent religious leaders and spiritual guides of the people.

Besides their worship in public, the Hebrews conducted religious services in their homes. These consisted of a great variety of rites and ceremonies, originating in old popular customs and beliefs. Such was probably the custom of circumcision of male infants; it is probable that this practice was adopted at a period of very

remote antiquity as a precaution against certain diseases, and afterwards further sanctioned by religion. The uncircumcised were forbidden to associate with the people of "true faith."

Their ideas of a hereafter were very vague and confused. The people believed that the dead in their graves joined their ancestors in a kind of common domicile, something like an underground kingdom, a kingdom of shades.

The Hebrew religion, at the epoch of the dual Kingdom, represented a conglomeration of conflicting beliefs, some reaching a high plane of thought, some on a far baser level. The ordinary man interpreted religion quite otherwise than the follower of the prophet; he looked upon Jehovah primarily as his tribal god, in the manner of the Phoenicians' attitude towards their god Baal, and was at a stage of intellectual development when he could not yet do without some visible image of the God he worshipped. More enlightened men, like the prophets and their disciples, preached that Jehovah could not be represented by a visible and material image, being Himself not material, and that as God of Israel, He was also the one God of the whole universe, and the Creator of man and nature. To these ideas a certain moral code was attached: what God demanded of His faithful, they urged, was not so much the strict observance of rites and ceremonies, as spiritual purity

and the application of a higher morality to their daily life. The essential of religion was not the cult, but the ethical integrity of the people. Such sermons as these, preached first by the prophets of the kingdom of Israel shortly before its fall, were later imitated in Judea and ultimately led to a radical change in the religious outlook of the Hebrews.

§ 75.

Literature.

For many centuries the creative genius of the Hebrew people found its expression in legends told by word of mouth, dealing with the creation of the world, the origin of various countries and nationalities, the past of the Hebrew people and their wanderings, their great deeds, their wars and their heroes, leaders and kings, and, finally, with God's commandments, and with the laws, customs and creed of the race. All these racial recollections were preserved in the memories of men and told by each generation to the next. Many of the legends survived in the form of songs; the chief commandments, such as those given to Moses on Sinai, were learned by heart and at a very early date were inscribed on stone tablets by means of certain symbols. Priests, Levites and prophets were the chief custodians of these legends and stories which were the spiritual wealth of the nation.

With their general growth and development, the Hebrews were brought into contact with the Phoenicians and other great peoples of the East from whom they acquired the art of writing which enabled them to transfer their legends from verbal to written form, in order to preserve them forever.

The art of writing was known in Israel at the time of David and Solomon, both kings employing men called scribes who were probably the chroniclers of all the outstanding events of their time. These chronicles most likely continued to be written during the reigns of these kings' successors in both kingdoms, as is proven by the fact that the later authors of the Biblical "Book of Kings" often refer to the "Chronicles of the Kings of Israel" and the "Chronicles of the Kings of Judea" as sources of more detailed information. As they became more and more skilled in the new art, they set down ancient legends, songs and tales, and collected them all together in two books, which have not survived, but which are quoted by the later chroniclers of the Biblical histories. One of these lost books was called the "Book of Jehovah's Wars" and the other the "Book of the Righteous," or, according to a more authentic interpretation, "The Book of Songs." Only fragments of this ancient poetry were preserved in the Bible, Deborah's song of victory, David's

elegy over the death of Saul, and a few other songs describing the wanderings of Israel in the wilderness during Moses' lifetime, and Joshua's conquest of Canaan.

The most ancient portions of the Bible, the Torah or Pentateuch, and the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings, were compiled at the period of the dual kingdoms when the scribes had attained to considerable skill in writing. In these remarkable books, simple legends were transformed into stories with a deep underlying moral significance, intended for the instruction of the people. The fragmentary and disjointed reminiscences of the nation's past were welded into coherent narratives of a profoundly religious character. The legends of the creation of the world, of the lives of the earliest men, of the flood and of the tower of Babel, common to the Hebrews and other Semites of Western Asia, acquired in these books a religious complexion and a beautiful, poetic form. In the stories of the Patriarchs' lives, there is a profound expression of the idea of the age-old covenant between Jehovah and the progenitors of the Hebrew people, and of the rightful claims of the latter to the land of Canaan.

Still more vividly does the religious and national idea appear in the accounts of the Israelites' life in Egypt and of their wanderings in the desert. The imposing personality of Moses,

inspired teacher of the people, stands clearly forth, and the revelation he received on Mount Sinai becomes the cornerstone of the Hebrew religion and social system. The Ten Commandments, the most ancient of these laws, and the more detailed "Book of Union," represent the foundation upon which the Torah is based.

From the VIIIth century B. C. onward, the prophets also began to write down their sermons and speeches for the instruction of posterity. Elijah and Elisha were the last of the prophets to leave no written evidence of their activities; the great prophets of later generations, Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah and many others, bequeathed to posterity their brilliant and profound utterances which are the most noble and lofty examples of Hebrew literature.

CHAPTER XI

The Last Century of the Dual Kingdom—830-720 B. C.

§ 76.

Jeroboam and Amos the Prophet.

FTER many years of disaster and ceaseless wars, the kingdom of Israel returned to peace and prosperity during the reign of Jeroboam II, the son of Jehoash, and fourth king of the dynasty of Jehu. Jeroboam II, whose reign lasted about sixty years, from 830 to 769 B. C., made successful war upon the Israelites' oppressors and extended the boundaries of the country. In the north he defeated the Arameans, carrying the war as far as Damascus, their capital, and he conquered the Moabites in the east. Such of their territories as lay on the borders of his, he annexed, thus restoring the kingdom of Israel to its former extent, from the mountains of Lebanon to the Dead Sea.

Secure against their enemies, his subjects found leisure once again to enjoy the fruits

of peace. Commerce with Phoenician cities brought great revenues to Israel. Samaria, the capital, became a place of beauty, adorned with the splendid mansions of wealthy citizens, and Jeroboam, the King, had two magnificent palaces there, one for his summer, and one for his winter residence. The citizens of wealth and substance lived in houses built of stone slabs ornamented with ivory; their attire was handsome and costly and they kept luxurious tables and extravagant cellars. They anointed their bodies with fragrant oils. Feasting and revelry went on unceasingly in their homes, and the women, even more than the men, lived in the unremitting pursuit of pleasure and gaiety. The increase of luxury and the new refinements of life which became more and more widespread, excited the desire for ever greater wealth, and fortunes began to be acquired through cheating and violence, and the oppression of the poor and laboring classes. Rich men lent money to the poor and those who failed to repay their debts at the appointed time, found themselves bereft by their creditors of all they owned, or else they forfeited their personal liberty and fell into slavery. In times of famine the rich sold grain to the poor at extortionate prices; those who sold cheated those who bought, using false weights and measures. Judges and other officials always upheld the

rich and influential against the poor, and thought nothing of accepting bribes offered by the guilty, so that the just cases of the complainants might be ignored and judgment delivered against them. Even the priests vied with each other in the race for profit and pleasure, seeing which the people were not slow to follow their example. Morals and religion were falling into rapid deterioration.

When matters had come to a very bad pass, a group of prophets appeared who, in their inspired sermons, fearlessly criticized the evil conduct of the rulers and representative citizens. The most eloquent of these prophets was Amos, who in his youth had been a shepherd in Tekoa, but had gone later on to live in Beth-El, the site of the principal temple of Jehovah and where King Jeroboam came very often to visit. Straight from his simple life in the country where he had been brought up, Amos beheld the wantonness of the city-dwellers with indignation and contempt. With all the power of his dazzling eloquence, he denounced the people's vices; he addressed them in the public places, calling down wrath upon the greed and extravagance of the rich, the cruelty of the influential and powerful, the universal immorality, and warned them that terrible disaster would surely befall the land of Israel unless they reformed without loss of time.

The priests of the temple at Beth-El disapproved intensely of the utterances of this new prophet and one of them, Amaziah, carried word to the king that Amos' predictions of the coming destruction of the state were made with a view to stirring up discontent among the people. Then Amaziah requested Amos to leave Beth-El, the holy city of Israel, and go to Judea to preach; but Amos answered: "I am not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet; I was a shepherd, but the Lord took me from my flock and said to me: 'Go and prophesy among My People,'" and he repeated once again his direful prediction of the fate in store for Israel, abating nothing of his severity.

Amos was the first of the Hebrew prophets to have his sermons preserved in the Bible. They are full of vehement appeals to the people to reform, to reconstruct society on a basis of right and justice, freedom and equality. "Woe unto them," he cries, "that lie upon beds of ivory and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock; that drink wine in bowls, that invent to themselves instruments of music, but are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph." To the rich and powerful, the prophet says: "Because you oppress the poor you shall build stone houses, but you shall not live in them; you shall plant fine vineyards but you shall not drink the wine

of them." And to the women of the ruling classes on their insatiable quest for pleasure, he speaks these words of warning: "Hear this word, you kine of Bashan that are in the mountain of Samaria, you who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to their masters: 'Bring, and let us drink!' the days shall come upon you that you will be taken away with hooks into exile and your posterity with fish-hooks." He derides the formal piety of the Israelites and tries to make them realize that the Lord's approval is not to be won by the performance of religious ceremonies, but by the exercise of justice and goodwill towards men. "Why do you bring offerings to Me?" asks the Lord. "I hate, I despise your feast days and your solemn assemblies. Though you offer Me burnt offerings and meat offerings, I will not accept them. Take away from Me the noise of your songs for I will not hear the melody of your viols. But let judgment run down as waters and righteousness as a mighty stream. The days shall come and I shall send a famine upon the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but for hearing the words of the Lord. And they shall wander from sea to sea and from the north to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord and shall not find it." Amos evidently preferred Judea to the corrupt king-

dom of Israel, for there, and in the rightful heirs and descendants of David, he saw the very core and substance of the nation, which would survive all political changes and disturbances. "I shall sift the house of Israel," saith the Lord, "yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth. In that day I shall raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen and I will raise up his ruins and I will build it as in the days of old."

§ 77.

Disturbances in the Kingdom of Israel. Assyria.

The long reign of Jeroboam II brought the peace of Israel to an end, and his death ushered in an era of unbroken strife. Again king followed king in swift succession, each new pretender employing the method of conspiracy and murder to gain the political power. Zachariah, the son of Jeroboam II, had reigned only six months when conspirators put him to death, and this was the end of the dynasty of Jehu. His murderer, Shallum, ascended the throne of Samaria, but soon afterwards himself fell victim to a plot similar to that which had set him on the throne, and this time, the usurper was Menahem-ben-Gadi, a native of the city of Tirzah. Menahem came to Samaria and declared himself King. (768 B. C.) All who refused

to recognize him were cruelly persecuted, as in Tiphsah, where the people refused to admit the imposter, but he immediately set siege to the city, and when he had forced the citizens to surrender, he slew them all, even the children and pregnant women. The country was on the verge of another civil war when powerful enemies appeared from without, threatening the kingdom from the direction of Mesopotamia, where the Assyrians had founded a great state between the Tigris and the Euphrates.

Assyria, owing to the warlike disposition of her kings, had become the most powerful country of Western Asia. After many conquests in Armenia, Media, Persia and Babylonia, the Assyrians now desired to extend their territories towards the Mediterranean, and their intention was to annex Aram, or Syria, maritime Phoenicia, the Kingdoms of Israel and Judea and ultimately Egypt via these other countries. The Assyrian rulers called themselves "emperors" and set out to acquire world-dominion. Their capital was Nineveh, a vast city upon the banks of the Tigris, known far and wide for the size of its population, its wealth and the magnificence of its palaces and temples. The Assyrian religion was based upon the worship of planets, and the chief deities were Bel, the god of the sun, and Ashtaroth,

queen of heaven and goddess of fertility. Bel was also the god of war and his favor was to be bought at the price of human sacrifice. Wherever they went, the Assyrian warriors gained a reputation for absolute invincibility. Isaiah, one of the Hebrew prophets, describes the Assyrian warriors thus:

"They come with speed swiftly; none is weary nor stumbles among them; none slumbers nor sleeps. Neither are the girdle of their loins loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes broken. Their arrows are sharp, and all their bows bent; their horses' hoofs are like flint and their wheels like whirlwind. They roar like young lions and lay hold of the prey and carry it away safe and there is none to deliver."

These formidable and all-conquering leaders, had now turned their eyes in the direction of Israel.

The king of Assyria, Pul, came with his great army by way of Damascus, invaded the north, taking many prisoners from the various tribes, together with a vast amount of plunder, and proceeded towards the capital, Samaria. Then King Menachem found himself between two enemies, on the one hand his own subjects on the verge of rebellion and on the other, this foreign enemy who approached nearer and nearer to the heart of his kingdom.

He took thought and decided to seek the help of the invaders against the enemy at home, so he paid Pul an enormous ransom against the Assyrian's promise to forego his plan of conquest and to help Menachem instead to retain his hold on the kingdom of Israel. The enemy then withdrew, but Israel had become a dependency of Assyria.

After a reign of ten years, Menachem died, and two years later the throne was again usurped by a military leader of great energy and courage, one Pekah. (755 B. C.) It was characteristic of this ruler that he at once prepared to free his kingdom from the power of Assyria. He entered into an alliance with Rezin, King of Aram, who was at that time at war with Assyria, and the two kings agreed to join forces against the common enemy, planning to win over the king of Judea to their cause later on.

While Israel was thus passing through this most turbulent period of her history, with the throne passing from one murderer into the hands of another, and with the upper classes sunk in profigacy and idolatry while the working classes eked out wretched existences in poverty and ignorance, new prophets, men whose vision, divinely inspired, permitted them to see into the future, still strove to show the people

the folly and the peril of their ways. The best known prophet of that period was Hosea. His impassioned speeches mercilessly exposed the religious and political errors of his time; he compared Samaria to an unfaithful wife who had left her lawful husband, Jehovah, to follow Baal, her lover. The kings of Samaria he likened bitterly to the "foam on the surface of the waters" and called them "the burden of kings and princes." "I gave thee a king in Mine anger, and took him away in My wrath," says the Lord through this prophet. He also reminds the people of the dawn of their history, of the exodus out of Egypt and of their forefathers' wanderings in the desert. "When Israel was a child, then I loved him and called My son out of Egypt. . . . I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the first ripe fruit in the fig-tree at her first time." The prophet voices the hope that after many calamities, poor, sinning Samaria would repent and say: "I will return to my first husband, for life was better with him."

§ 78.

Uzziah and Ahaz, Kings of Judea.

The kingdom of Judea did not suffer from such violent and sanguinary upheavals as those which undermined the strength of the kingdom of Israel. The dynasty of David was

firmly established there and the throne passed without interruption from father to son. During the reign of Joash's grandson, Uzziah, Judea again became strong and prosperous. Uzziah combined the qualities of a valiant general with those of a wise ruler. For the protection of his country from enemy invasions, he increased the army and built many fortresses throughout the land. He was especially mindful of the fortification of Jerusalem and raised many towers upon the city walls with appliances for flinging stones and arrows. Uzziah also encouraged industry and agriculture, and Judean trade with Egypt and Phoenecia grew and prospered. "The land was full of gold and silver, of horses and chariots," says a contemporary prophet. The increase of wealth and consequent gradual refining of the general mode of life, however, led to the same seeking after pleasure, the same struggle for ever greater luxury and the same lax morals as prevailed in Israel, although to a lesser degree. King Uzziah was renowned for his piety, and it was not until the end of his reign that he quarreled fatally with the priests. One day he entered the temple with the object of burning incense upon the altar which the law allowed only the priests to do. As the King approached the altar, a leprosy fell upon him and festering sores broke out upon his forehead. According

to the customs of the times, a leper was compelled to live in complete isolation and might never appear among his fellow-men, so when Uzziah found himself afflicted with this fearful disease, he abdicated the throne in favor of his son Jotham. Jotham's reign lasted fifteen years.

The reign of Ahaz, son of Jotham, brought fresh disasters to Judea. (739-724 B. C.) Ahaz ascended the throne just as Pekah, king of Israel, and Rezin, king of Aram, were concluding their defensive alliance against Assyria. They asked him to join them but Ahaz refused, in fear of the consequences of antagonizing so powerful a neighbor as Assyria. Thereupon Pekah and Rezin declared war on Judea, their allied armies invading and laying waste the country. Ahaz was in despair as they drew irresistibly nearer and nearer to Jerusalem, and at last he sent messengers to the Assyrian king, Tiglath-Pileser, bearing the following message: "I am your slave and your son. Come and save me from the kings of Aram and Israel who have taken up arms against me." The Assyrian king was much gratified at this proof of submission on the part of Ahaz, who instead of joining the enemies of Assyria, came meekly begging for protection, and without delay he despatched an army of counter-invasion into the rebel kingdoms of Israel and Aram.

§ 79.

The Fall of the Kingdom of Israel.

As soon as the allies, Pekah and Rezin, learned of the Assyrian invasion of their kingdoms, they abandoned Judea and hastily returned home. But they were too late: Tiglath Pileser had taken Damascus, the capital of Aram, and banished the inhabitants into a distant country. King Rezin was taken prisoner and afterwards killed. The Assyrian king annexed Aram which was later renamed "Syria," and then invaded Israel, where Gilead in the east and Naphtali, Zebulum and Asher in the north soon gave way before his onslaughts. These lands he also added to his possessions and, taking their inhabitants prisoner, he sent them all away to the remotest borderlands of the Assyrian kingdom.

Thus the kingdom of Israel was deprived at a single blow of half of its territories. (735 B. C.) Pekah's dominion now extended only to the lands of Ephraim and the neighboring tribes, with Samaria, the capital, in the center. This remnant of a kingdom was further forced to recognize the supremacy of the Assyrian king and pay him tribute. Pekah's rebellion which had brought such disaster upon the country earned him also the resentment of many of his subjects, and a plot was formed

to get rid of him. He was murdered by Hoshea-ben-Elah, the ringleader of the conspiracy, who, with the help of the Assyrians, became king in the year 734 B. C.

Hoshea remained the vassal of Assyria for ten years, but he found the foreign yoke very irksome to bear and cast about for an opportunity to free himself and his country. When Tilgath-Pileser died, disorder reigned once more in Palestine. The Phoenicians of Tyre and several other tributary peoples rebelled against the supremacy of Assyria, and all the lesser nations expected Egypt, Assyria's most formidable rival, to help them in their revolts. The king of Israel also allowed the onrushing wave of rebellion to carry him away, and involved himself in secret negotiations with the Pharaoh, So. Convinced that So would come to his aid in case of need, Hoshea stopped paying his yearly tribute to the successor of Tiglath-Pileser, the "great king" Shalmaneser. His expectations were not realized, however, and when the indignant Shalmaneser, with a huge army, invaded the kingdom of Israel, the Egyptians did not even attempt to render assistance to Hoshea. One city after another fell into the Assyrians' hands, until at last they reached Samaria, which they besieged. Before the siege began, Hoshea was captured by the enemy and thrown into prison as a traitor.

(724 B. C.) The people of the besieged, though well fortified capital, put up a desperate resistance, but the Assyrians maintained the siege for three years and took the city only after Shalmaneser's death, when his successor, Sargon, had become ruler of Assyria. (721 B. C.)

Samaria taken, the Assyrian conqueror decided to put an end to the kingdom of Israel for ever. To this end he resorted to the Assyrians' customary procedure with conquered enemy countries; he led tens of thousands of Israelites away into captivity, and afterwards banished them to the farthest parts of his empire, "in Halah and in Haor, by the river of Gozan and in the cities of the Medes." More than twenty-eight thousand persons were banished from Samaria alone, but many of the others saved themselves by fleeing to the neighboring kingdom of Judea.

In spite of their almost complete subjugation, the surviving inhabitants of Judea made a second attempt to rebel against Assyria one year after the sack of Samaria, and the discovery of this insurrection led again to the forcible removal of Israelites into distant lands. Thus, Samaria and many other Israelitish cities lost most of their population. Deported into distant foreign countries, the Israelites gradually assimilated with the heathen natives and in time lost their individuality altogether.

The abandoned and depopulated cities of Israel were settled by Assyrians and Babylonians from the interior, sent there by order of the Assyrian king. The new settlers were heathens but as time passed, they adopted many Israelitish customs and beliefs. They intermarried with the few native Israelites who had been allowed to remain in the country and as time went on, became a distinct and separate nation, half Hebrew and half heathen, and were known as Samaritans.

Thus perished the kingdom of Israel or the Ten Tribes, having survived its separation from Judea for two and a half centuries. Not only did the kingdom disappear, but the greater part of its population with it, the people being dispersed amongst many Asiatic nations. The final calamity was the result of a slow and gradual accumulation of circumstances. The division of the kingdom after Solomon's death struck the first blow at the unity of the Hebrew people. Divided in two, the kingdom had no longer strength to withstand its outside enemies and so the greater portion of it was soon destroyed, leaving only the smaller part, Judea. Of the whole Hebrew nation, only the tribes of Judah and of Benjamin and part of the tribe of Levi remained, together with a few surviving members of the northern

tribes who had fled to Judea after the destruction of Samaria.

§ 80.

King Ahaz and Isaiah, the Prophet.

The mighty Assyria, having destroyed the rebellious kingdom of Israel, rewarded the submission of Judea by not molesting it in its weakness. Ahaz, the king of Judea, voluntarily recognized the supreme rule of the king of Assyria. When Tiglath-Pileser conquered half the kingdom of Israel, Ahaz went to Damascus to welcome the conquerer and secure his goodwill. While there, he became accustomed to the ways of the Assyrians and found them greatly to his liking. The object of his special admiration was the heathen altar to which the conquerer brought offerings to the Assyrian god. Ahaz sent designs of this altar from Damascus to Jerusalem to the High-Priest, Uriah, and requested him to see to the building of a similar altar there. Uriah obeyed and when Ahaz returned home, he tried to introduce into Jerusalem the Assyrian worship of the sun and other planets. In honor of the sun-god, a chariot drawn by horses was placed near the entrance to the temple. So far did Ahaz go in his slavish imitation of the heathen foreigners, that once, when threatened with some misfortune, he burned one of his own sons

alive upon the altar of the god Moloch, in order to appease that deity's anger. Many of the Judean dignitaries imitated the king's impious conduct and the moral standards of the country were declining as rapidly and as completely as those of Israel had done before them. In the sixteenth year of his reign, Ahaz fortunately died, and his son, Hezekiah, a wise and pious man, ascended the throne. (724 B. C.) He ruled his country in a very different spirit from his father's and strove to restore the national Hebrew customs. When, in the beginning of his reign, the Assyrians took Samaria, the Judeans regarded the event as an act of vengeance on the part of the Lord, for the wickedness of the Israelites; and they gladly gave their wholehearted support to the young king who had undertaken the difficult task of eradicating heathenism in his kingdom and reforming it in every other way as well.

The greatest of the Hebrew prophets, Isaiah, the son of Amos, lived during the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah in Judea. Isaiah's activities as a prophet began during the reign of Ahaz's father, when Judea was rich and powerful and at peace. But even then the wealthy and influential people were modeling their lives on the pattern of the wicked Samaritans, and from his altitude of virtue in their midst, Isaiah, in the name of God, fearlessly exposed the

vices of the upper classes in the capital, keeping ever before the people's eyes those lofty spiritual and social ideals towards which, in later centuries, the greatest teachers of mankind were still striving to lead the world.

"How is the faithful city become a harlot!" exclaims the prophet. "It was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it, but now murderers. Thy princes are rebellious and companions of thieves; every one loveth gifts and followeth after rewards; they judge not the fatherless, nor doth the cause of the widow come unto them. Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? said the Lord. When ye come to appear before Me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread My courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto Me; your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hateth. When ye make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of blood. Wash ye, make ye clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil! Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow."*

*Isaiah, 1, 11-23, v. 8.

The sermons of Isaiah gained in bitterness as, during the reign of Ahaz, Jerusalem began its humiliating imitation of the Assyrians, and introduced their idolatrous religion into the stronghold of the Hebrew nation. The prophet witnessed the invasion of Tiglath-Pileser who conquered Aram and half the kingdom of Israel and predicted a similar fate for Judea unless the people reformed in time. He poured scorn upon the cowardice of Ahaz and his servile submission to the Assyrian king. For the Assyrians were only "the rod of Mine anger," so spoke the Lord through his prophet, "and the staff in their hands is Mine indignation. . . . Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith, or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it?" It was the rod that the dazzled Ahab feared, not God in whose hands that rod was but a weapon incapable of its own action. The prophet foresaw a future in which the pride of Assyria would be humbled to the dust, though all nations had once trembled before her. He also prophesied the fate of Damascus, Samaria, Tyre (Phoenicia), Moab, Egypt and other countries.

His sermons are of arresting and powerful eloquence, full of poetic beauty, and his thunderous denunciations of their vices kept the conscience of the people ever awake throughout an epoch of the deepest social and moral deprav-

ity. Amongst Isaiah's disciples and followers were numbered many members of the highest families of Judea and those very men saved the citizens from certain destruction. The prophet lived to see better days when the righteous Hezekiah came to rule and abolished all the disgraceful heathen customs introduced by Ahaz, his father. Then Isaiah's prophecies became more hopeful and cheering, and he gave expression to his ideal of a good ruler and a happy country in the following words:

"And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse (the dynasty of David) and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him (the King), the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. . . . With righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed (together) their young ones shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the suckling child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his

hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

Before the mental vision of the prophet the picture rises, not of a powerful military kingdom conquering the world by its sword, but of of a peaceful land inhabited by a peace-loving nation, ruled by the spirit of justice to all and striving to hold an equal balance between weak and strong, to reconcile divergent interests and abolish distinctions of class. It is not for Judea to try and rival Assyria, "the peaceful waters of Shiloh (a stream in Jerusalem) must not seek to outdo the mighty roar of the waters of Euphrates" that inundate vast tracts of land. The strength of the Hebrew kingdom must ever lie in its moral righteousness and social order, not in its military supremacy as a "world power" with its position founded upon violence and its right upon the weight of its fist. And above all, the Hebrew nation must continue to work towards perfection in conduct so as to be as an example to all other peoples until all the world should be brought together in the closest spiritual unity with them.

"And it shall come to pass in the last days," says the prophet, "that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the

hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and He will teach us of His ways and we will walk in His paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people. And they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."*

*Isaiah, 11, 2-4.

CHAPTER XII

The Kingdom of Judea Under the Domination of Assyria and Babylonia— 720-586 B. C.

§ 81.

Hezekiah.

NOT since the time of the great King David had the throne of Judea been occupied by such a king as Hezekiah, so just and so devoted to the interests of his people. (724-696 B. C.) Judea had been spared by the Assyrians and Hezekiah's great desire was to save it from the bitter fate that had overtaken its sister kingdom of Samaria. To this end the young king set himself to strengthen the spirit of true religion and a respect for law and order throughout his kingdom. He threw himself heart and soul into the task of exterminating the idolatrous religions introduced from Assyria into Judea by his father Ahaz. He gave orders for the destruction of all idols, not excepting the copper image of a serpent which the people worshipped as the healer of their diseases. Hezekiah forbade the

building of altars on hilltops in cities and villages. On important holidays he made everybody attend divine services in the Jerusalem temple from which he ordered the removal of the heathen images that had long desecrated its sanctity; he expelled the infidel priests and put trustworthy Levites in their places who once more conducted the services according to ancient customs. Domestic animals were offered up by the priests upon the altar of Jehovah while the Levites sang psalms and played upon various musical instruments. The most elaborate celebration of all was for the Passover, when people from all over the kingdom came to Jerusalem. On occasions of such solemnity as this, the King went about in the midst of his subjects, praying and feasting with them. He surrounded himself with prophets and held the great Isaiah in the highest esteem.

When he had set the domestic affairs of his state in order, Hezekiah turned to the task of consolidating its international position. Ever since the time of Ahaz, Judea had recognized the sovereignty of the Assyrians and paid them yearly tribute, but now Hezekiah decided that the time had come to lift his country out of its humiliating position as a vassal state. At that period Assyria was ruled by the haughty King Sennacherib, whose desire for dominion was insatiable and did not stop even at coveting the

powerful kingdom of Egypt. The Pharaoh, Tirhakah, was just then preparing to repel an imminent invasion of Assyrians and Hezekiah joined him against their common enemy. Under the terms of their alliance, Tirhakah promised Hezekiah that in case of their attacking Judea the Egyptian horsemen would immediately come to the aid of the Hebrews. Isaiah, the prophet, did not approve of this alliance and insisted that the Egyptians with their false promises were not to be trusted. "The Lord shall stretch forth His arm," said the prophet, "and the helper shall stumble and the one who is helped shall fall and they shall perish together." But Hezekiah, supported by his advisors, for once disregarded the prophet's warning. He took all due measures to fortify Jerusalem against attack, building a new wall around the old one and re-inforcing it with towers. Moats were dug around the walls, and a great quantity of armaments made ready. Enough water to supply the city was conserved in tanks and all the springs and streams outside the walls then filled with earth in order to deprive the enemy of drinking water during the siege. When all these preparations had been made, Hezekiah declared himself in revolt against the overlordship of Assyria. (703 B. C.)

§ 82.

The Invasion by Sennacherib.

When King Hezekiah's rebellion became known, Sennacherib, with his immense army, was marching towards Egypt, but hearing of the alliance that had been concluded between the two kings, the Assyrian decided to subdue Judea first since he had to pass that way on the road to Egypt. So the Assyrians invaded Judea and began to destroy cities and plunder the people. They encamped near the city of Lachish, a short distance from Jerusalem, and from there Sennacherib sent three statesmen with a band of warriors into Jerusalem to demand the surrender of the city. The messengers demanded audience of Hezekiah, but the king did not appear. Instead he sent his chief court steward, Eliakim, with two other dignitaries to receive the Assyrian ambassadors. The meeting took place near one of the fortification walls and the frightened citizens mounted the walls to see what would happen. One of the Assyrian messengers Rab-shakeh, addressed the Hebrews in the following words:

"Say this to Hezekiah in the name of the great king of Assyria: 'What are your hopes, and why did you rebel against me? In vain do you lean upon Egypt which, like a broken rod, may pierce the hand of him who leans

upon it. Can you match your strength even against one of the petty kings who serve my master?'" Then, turning towards the terrified populace upon the wall, Rab-shakeh cried in a loud voice: "Do not let Hezekiah, your king, deceive you, for he will not save you from the hands of the king of Assyria. Do not let him assure you that Jehovah will save you and that your city will not be taken by the Assyrians. Did the gods of other peoples save their lands from being taken by us?" They made no answer to this harangue.

When the Hebrew messengers returned and repeated the words of Rab-sakeh to Hezekiah the king was much alarmed and begged Isaiah to pray to God for the salvation of Jerusalem. Touched by the king's humility the prophet did his best to allay his fears and assured him that the Lord would never grant victory to Sennacherib who had spoken with such derision of the people of Judea and of Jehovah, their God.

While the two kings were thus exchanging ultimatum and defiance, Tirhaka, the King of Egypt, started out for Assyria at the head of a mighty host. Then Sennacherib and his army left Judea and went to circumvent Tirhakah's plan before he got far on his way, but Sennacherib again sent a threatening message to Hezekiah commanding his instant submission to

Assyria. Still believing in Egypt's promise of help, Hezekiah persisted in his refusal. He and all the people prayed fervently in the temple of Jerusalem for the salvation of their country, and Isaiah, the prophet, kept their spirits from failing by the wonderful sermons he preached, in which he foretold the impending destruction of the Assyrian army. Very soon news was brought that Sennacherib's huge force, which had set out in the direction of Egypt, was returning in great haste. (701 B. C.) Rumors spread among the Hebrews that God had sent a plague upon the Assyrians and that "an angel of the Lord" had destroyed one hundred and eighty-five thousand men in their camp in a single night. In Egypt it was told how, also in a single night, swarms of field rats had devoured the clothes, footwear and weapons of the Assyrians, compelling them to retreat. Sennacherib fled to Nineveh. Thus did God's punishment fall upon the enemy in his pride and Jerusalem was saved from destruction. During the latter years of Hezekiah's life, Judea again enjoyed peace and prosperity and in the twenty-eighth year of his reign the good king died and was buried in the tomb where all the members of David's dynasty were laid to rest.

§ 83.

The Decline of Religion During the Reign of Manasseh.

During the period following Hezekiah's death the spiritual life of the Judeans underwent a great change for the worse. Hezekiah's son, Manasseh, (695-640 B. C.) did not follow in the footsteps of his good father but resembled rather his wicked grandfather Ahaz. When Hezekiah died, Manasseh was but twelve years old; the now aged men who had formerly been the advisors of Ahaz and other courtiers whom Hezekiah had expelled for idolatry, took advantage of the new king's youth and inexperience to assume full charge of the country's affairs. Until he came of age they ruled in his name and trained him in the meantime to rule in such a manner as would be pleasing to them afterwards. Manasseh abolished all the reforms which has father had with such difficulty accomplished. He made no request that the people from all over the land assemble in Jerusalem for the services in the temple on the great holidays, but allowed them to build altars upon hilltops wherever they liked and make their offerings there. Heathen forms of worship that the Israelites' ancestors had practised in old Canaan were revived and legalized. An unprecedented commingling of conflicting religious

rites prevailed throughout Jerusalem. Altars to Baal and images of Ashtaroth arose on every side and many temples were built for the planet-worship introduced from Assyria. Heathen images and altars sometimes stood even in the midst of the squares and courtyards that surrounded the temple of Jerusalem itself. Just outside the city, in the valley of Hinnon, there was an altar upon which little children were sacrificed to Jehovah in imitation of the services to the blood-thirsty god Moloch. Idolatry went hand in hand with moral depravity and the crudest superstitions. The country was full of wicked priestesses, sorcerers, magicians and invokers of the dead. Such priests and prophets as dared to raise their voices against the heathenish abominations that flourished throughout the land were most cruelly persecuted. The great prophet Isaiah had died, but his disciples fearlessly carried on his work, exposing the evil-doing of the king and people and warning them continually of God's imminent retribution in store for them. Even Isaiah in his lifetime did not escape persecution, for, according to an old Talmudic legend, while he was hiding in the hollow of a cedar to escape his enemies, King Menasseh found him there and ordered the tree to be sawed in halves with the prophet in it. The heartless treatment they suffered, did nothing, however, to diminish

the courage or the ardour of the disciples. Once more Judea had been reduced to the position of Assyria's vassal and Manasseh had no choice but to accept the enemy's terms, being unable to resist his military force.

Manasseh reigned about fifty years. A plot hatched among his courtiers in the second year of his reign had resulted in the murder of his son Amon in 640 B. C., so that when he died, the next in succession was a child of eight years old, Amon's son, Josiah.

§ 84.

The Restoration of the Religion During the Reign of Josiah.

During Josiah's long minority, Judea was ruled by the same men as, in his father's time, had transformed the kingdom into a hardly less heathen one than the Assyrian's own, from which such evil influences had spread to their Hebrew vassals. But when the new king came of age and assumed his share in the affairs of state, his eyes were opened to the iniquity of the old order and he was powerfully drawn to the prophets' party which had so urgently and vainly striven to reform the erring people. Supported by this party, King Josiah resolved to follow the example of his great-grandfather, Hezekiah, and he lost no time in instituting widespread reforms. His first ac-

tion was to order the priests to collect money and employ the finest craftsmen available to restore the temple of Jerusalem which was beginning to show the signs of its venerable age.

While the work was going forward, a manuscript was found in which some of the ancient laws and precepts of Moses were recorded. This was the last book of the Pentateuch, known as Deuteronomy. The High-Priest, Hilkiah, who found the manuscript, gave it to the king's scribe who carried it to Josiah. The book was written out as the dying testament of the great teacher Moses, made in the desert during his last hours, and it contained predictions of the people's future and of the kingdom of Israel. In gentle and moving words Moses exhorts the Hebrews to observe the laws of true religion and morality and admonishes them against imitating the heathen. The fundamental idea of the book is that of the existence of One God, all-perfect and all-merciful, who, choosing amongst the nations of the earth, took Israel for his favorite and entrusted it with the keeping of the great truths of faith, love and kindness. This God, Jehovah, like a good father, watches over the future of his people and demands of them only loyalty to his commandments in return. These commandments represent a certain code, the observance of which secures the peace and well-being not only of the

individual but of the whole community. Simple living, unquestioning faith, truthfulness and justice, and especially the protection of the weak and defenceless, form the basis of the Mosaic law and as a system of social morality, it stands supreme amongst the religious teachings of the whole world. Lofty as are these ideals, they do not tend to visionary aspirations towards the unattainable; every rule and law applies to some essential aspect of everyday life and is capable of observance by everyone. "The law which I give to you," says Moses to his people, "is not unattainable for you, neither is it far from you. It is not in heaven, nor beyond the sea, but it is very near to you; it is within your heart and upon your lips and obedience to it depends on you alone." Exhortations to the observance of the law goes hand in hand with threats of retribution for such future generations as might fail to do so. Any straying from the paths of virtue must, according to the words of Moses, inevitably bring God's punishment in its train, with calamity throughout the land, the kingdom's decline or even its total destruction.

When the scribe finished reading the sacred manuscript to the king, Josiah showed how profoundly the recital had affected him; his eyes had been opened and he saw clearly for the first time how far the Hebrew nation had

strayed from God's holy commandments which He had given to Israel through Moses, and he was filled with foreboding that the terrible disasters predicted by the great teacher were soon to occur in the kingdom of Judea.

In great perturbation the king sent courtiers to the prophetess Huldah, to ask her whether or no the people might expect to be punished by God for the sins of the preceding generations, and she sent answer that God had long since decided to punish the Judeans for their violation of his laws, but since Josiah had humbled himself before the Lord, the calamity destined to befall the land would not occur during his reign. Reassured, Josiah summoned the people to the temple of Jerusalem and there he read the new holy book aloud to them. Then he made them promise to observe the divine laws contained in the holy document, and they promised to do so. The king next set himself to the task of eradicating idolatry from the kingdom; altars, images and monuments to heathen gods were once more torn down and the idols removed from the temple and burned. The chariot of the sun-god that stood near the entrance to the temple shared the fate of the rest, and the priests and priestesses of the heathen deities were banished forever. Having thus effaced every trace of the idolatrous past of the nation, when the spring came Josiah

summoned the people from far and wide to assemble in Jerusalem for the celebration of Passover with fitting solemnity, and according to the law. Thus the good king accomplished the revival of religious and social life according to the true Hebrew tradition in Judea.

All his subjects extolled him for his piety and compared him to the righteous Hezekiah and even to David himself. During his reign the prophets became very influential in all affairs of state. The chief of these was Jeremiah, a descendant of priests. In his early youth he had felt the divine gift of prophesy stir within him and when he grew up he followed his ordained vocation. In obedience to the inspiration that came to him, he told the unvarnished and often bitter truth to all alike, to the King as to the priests, to the eminent as to the lowly. In every question of the country's foreign policies and the spiritual life of the people, he strove to direct the issue in accordance with the basic laws set forth in Deuteronomy and very soon rose to the same exalted position in Judea as in former years Isaiah had held.

§ 85.

The Struggle With Egypt. Jehoiakim.

During the latter years of Josiah's reign, extensive migrations began in the East and brought about profound changes in the des-

tinies of many kingdoms. The proud Assyria, mistress of Asia, stood already on the verge of her downfall. Media and Babylonia, the greatest of her provinces, had already seceded, and it was not long before they commenced to threaten the once sovereign country and its capital, Nineveh. The impending conflict gave the Judeans fresh hope for their own independence. In addition to this internal disruption, Egypt, Assyria's old enemy, was once again showing disquieting signs of activity. Necho, the Pharaoh, saw where he might profit by the disintegration of the empire to get some of it for himself, and therefore he set out with a numerous army in the direction of the Euphrates. To reach Assyria he had to pass through Judea and this Josiah decided to prevent, fearing that if the Egyptians succeeded in conquering the neighboring Assyrian provinces, they would proceed to demand allegiance from Judea as an Assyrian vassal state. With this hope of God's help to sustain him, the king of Judea gathered his small army and went to meet Necho and bar his further progress. The Egyptian and Judean armies met in the valley of Meggido, near the Carmel mountains, and the battle which was fought there ended disastrously for the latter; they were completely defeated and King Josiah himself received a mortal wound. (608 B. C.) His men im-

mediately carried the dying leader to Jerusalem where the people attended the sad homecoming of their beloved king with tears and lamentation. The defeat at Meggido left Judea the vassal of Egypt and when he had taken the whole of Aram away from the Assyrians, Necho proclaimed himself the supreme ruler over the neighboring kingdom of Judea. Josiah was survived by three sons and the eldest, Jehoiakim was appointed King of Judea by Necho. (607-597 B. C.) Jehoiakim was a cruel and despotic man whose rule greatly displeased the people but he found much favor in the eyes of the Pharaoh whom he obeyed implicitly. Necho imposed a crushing indemnity upon Judea as a penalty for Josiah's resistance, and Jehoiakim was very strict in collecting the money from the people with which to pay it.

Thus failed Judea's hopes of freedom which the weakness of Assyria had kindled, and Egyptian supremacy, instead of Assyrian, was established in Judea. Jehoiakim and his officials were cheerfully resigned to the servile position of the country and even went so far in their efforts to ingratiate themselves with the Egyptians as to import idolatry and foreign customs into Jerusalem itself. The king tried to imitate the Pharaohs in their luxurious living; he began by ordering himself a new pal-

ace in Jerusalem, which the citizens were forced to build. The rule of an oligarchy was again established and the Hebrew people groaned under the heavy yoke laid upon them, not only by foreigners but by their own rulers into the bargain.

§ 86.

Jehoiakim and Jeremiah, the Prophet.

Those true friends of the people, the prophets, of whom the greatest was Jeremiah, maintained a relentless struggle against the depravity of the king and the upper classes of society. Jeremiah compelled both king and courtiers to hear his unwelcome truths bitterly set forth, and he went about predicting that the Lord, in His anger, would deal with Judea as He had dealt with Samaria in bygone times. He burned with indignation against those hypocrites who tried to conceal their iniquity beneath a cloak of piety and buoy the people up with the false assurance that the Lord would protect Jerusalem for the sake of the holy temple. Those lying and misleading tongues were to be found chiefly amongst the priests, and Jeremiah called them "the false prophets."

"Trust you not in lying words, saying, the temple of the Lord is here. Will you steal, murder and commit adultery and swear falsely and burn incense unto Baal and then come and

stand before the Lord in His house and say, 'We are delivered?' And then perform all those abominations again? Go unto Shiloh where a temple of the Lord also stood and see what became of it because of the sins of Israel. You are committing the same crimes, and the Lord shall deal with the temple of Jerusalem as He dealt with the temple of Shiloh; He shall cast you out as He cast out the descendants of Ephraim." One day, when Jeremiah was preaching a sermon in this vein in the temple of Jerusalem, he was surrounded by a crowd of priests and "false prophets" who shouted: "For this you shall die, Jeremiah, since you have said that the temple of Jerusalem will be destroyed even as the temple of Shiloh." A vast crowd gathered in the square before the temple and the courtiers, hearing the commotion, also hastened to the spot near the temple gates where the trial of Jeremiah was to take place. Priests and false prophets demanded his execution as a punishment for the evil prophecies he never tired of repeating. Addressing the judges and the assembled people, Jeremiah answered: "The Lord sent me to tell you all you have heard from me. Therefore mend your ways and obey Him; only then will He divert from Israel the disaster He has prepared. As for me, I am in your hands; do with me as you will." The judges acquitted

Jeremiah, admitting that he spoke in the name of the Lord, and thanks to the intervention of his friends, the prophet was saved from assault by the mob. In the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign occurred an event of signal importance, the fall of Assyria and the destruction of Nineveh, the capital, by the Medes and the Babylonians under King Sardanapalus. Babylonia, by that victory, became supreme in Asia. The warlike king Nebuchadnezzar, having annexed the Assyrian dominions, desired Syria also, but that country had already been conquered by Necho of Egypt. Nebuchadnezzar therefore declared war upon Egypt and a sanguinary battle took place near the city of Charchemish, in which the latter won the day. Necho was forced to surrender the whole of Syria to the Babylonian conqueror as also his sovereignty over Judea. (604 B. C.) Jeremiah, the prophet, advised the king of Judea to submit voluntarily to the power of the invincible Nebuchadnezzar, but Jehoiakim demurred, hoping that Egypt would come to his assistance. Then Jeremiah in his sermons predicted that the king of Babylonia was soon to come and devastate the kingdom of Judea.

§ 87.

Babylonian Domination.

Jeremiah's melancholy prognostications soon began to come true. The victorious Nebuchad-

nezzar was approaching Judea with an enormous army. The border cities were already being sacked and the people robbed of all they possessed, and then Jehoiakim decided to submit to Nebuchadnezzar and allow Judea to become the vassal of Babylonia. (600 B. C.)

Jehoiakim, however, was unable to resign himself to Judea's humiliation and cast about for an opportunity to free his country. Three years later, at the instigation of, and abetted by, the King of Egypt, he refused to pay tribute to the king of Babylon, and the threatened disaster in store for Judea was definitely precipitated. Nebuchadnezzar, then at war with Egypt and Phoenicia, first sent a small army to Judea to destroy the border cities, but at the same time prepared to go there himself with a larger army as soon as he had brought the war on hand to a successful conclusion.

In the midsts of these troublous times, Jehoiakim died, and his son, Jehoiachin, a youth of eighteen years old, succeeded him on the throne. (597 B. C.) Nehushta, the mother of the young king, was the country's virtual ruler and everything went on as during Jehoiakim's lifetime. The new king reigned only three months, however, for Nebuchadnezzar, having conquered part of Phoenicia and Palestine, invaded Judea, seized several cities and finally laid siege to Jerusalem. When the siege began,

the queen and her son realized that the capital could never withstand the redoubtable strength of the Babylonians, so Jehoiachin and his mother, attended by their courtiers, left Jerusalem and went of their own free will into the Babylonian camp in order to shew their submission to Nebuchadnezzar, and thereby appease his fury. But the arrogant conqueror was not to be thus easily pacified. He ordered that Jehoiachin and his mother be detained and sent as prisoners to Babylon, his capital, and with them ten thousand prominent citizens, priests and armorers of Jerusalem who had been known opponents of Babylonian domination. Further, Nebuchadnezzar carried away quantities of gold and silver from the palace and temple, and the Judean capital was thus at one stroke deprived of its most important inhabitants and of the greater portion of its wealth. The remainder of the population of Judea was ruled by Zedekiah, Josiah's youngest son (597-586 B. C.) whom Nebuchadnezzar appointed under oath to serve Babylon loyally as long as he lived.

§ 88.

Zedekiah. Preparations for an Uprising.

The reign of Zedekiah, which lasted ten years, was a period of unrest in the kingdom of Judea. The new king was weak and irresolute, and incapable of governing the coun-

try in such turbulent times. He followed Jeremiah's oft-reiterated advice that the rule of Babylonia had to be patiently endured in order that the affairs of Judea might not go from bad to worse, but at the same time lent an attentive ear to courtiers who urged rebellion and the liberation of the country from the Babylonian yoke.

The desire to fight for the freedom of their country was particularly strong amongst the Judean exiles living with Jehoiachin in Babylonia. The thought of returning to their homes was ever present in their minds and they were constantly engaged in secret negotiations with their friends and relatives in Jerusalem concerning the progress of the revolt there. The young prophet Ezekiel, who shared their exile, warned them in vain against pursuing their fatal project. His passionate exhortations to resign themselves to their Babylonian captivity, accepting it as God's punishment for their former sins and errors, fell upon deaf ears. They refused to heed his assurance that the rest of the people of Judea would soon find themselves in exile also and that the Lord's mercy on His people would come only much later when their souls had been purified through suffering. The Hebrews in Babylonia paid as little attention to Ezekiel as the Hebrews in Jerusalem were paying to Jeremiah. When the latter

heard of the plans of the Babylonian exiles, he sent them a letter in which he tried to prevail upon them to stay peacefully where destiny had placed them. "Build your houses there," he wrote, "and live in them; plant your gardens there and eat the fruits of them. And seek the peace of the city where the Lord caused you to be sent as captives, and pray unto the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof shall you have peace. After seventy years shall be accomplished at Babylon, the Lord will return you from captivity." The exiles received this letter with a very ill grace, and the people of Jerusalem had also turned against Jeremiah, calling him a traitor and friend of Nebuchadnezzar, and he grieved with all his heart over their failure to understand him, for he loved his country ardently and knew that a rebellion against Babylon would surely bring catastrophe in its train.

§ 89.

The Fall of Jerusalem.

For seven or eight years Zedekiah kept his oath of allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar, then finally decided to free his country from the Babylonian yoke in accordance with the demand of the majority of the people of Jerusalem. By suspending payment of his regular tribute, the independence of Judea was declared

and the people flung themselves into preparations for war against the enemy. When this news was brought to Nebuchadnezzar he fell into a mighty rage and set out with an enormous army to punish the rebels. He entered Judea, captured many fortified cities, which he plundered and whose inhabitants he drove into exile. At the approach of the invader, the people from the villages fled into Jerusalem, thereby creating hopeless congestion, where already the population was too great. Jerusalem was strongly fortified and the insurgents decided to resist the enemy as long as the defences held.

In the winter of 587 B. C. the army of Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem and surrounded it with ramparts All .the inhabitants took up arms in defence of the capital and in order to increase the number of warriors, Zedekiah ordered all slaves of Hebrew descent to be freed. The Judeans withstood the siege with great bravery and the Babylonians remained for a whole year encamped outside the walls without succeeding in forcing an entrance. Suddenly Nebuchadnezzar learned that the king of Egypt had declared war upon him and, retreating in haste from Jerusalem, he went out to meet the Egyptians. Great was the rejoicing in Jerusalem, for the Babylonians' defeat at the hands of Egypt was confidently expected.

But their optimism was misplaced and their rejoicings premature, for Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Egyptian army and resumed his siege of Jerusalem which he now began to attack with redoubled violence. The prophet Jeremiah incessantly repeated that the city would fall unless the people surrendered at once, and, at last the courtiers could stand his promises of evil no longer. They complained to Zedekiah, saying: "Jeremiah must be put instantly to death, for he is undermining the courage of our soldiers by his prophesies of disaster." And the king answered: "He is in your hands; I can do nothing against your wishes." By order of the officials, then, Jeremiah was cast into a pit full of mud where he would surely have perished had not one of the court servants, an Ethiopian, taken pity on him. His rescuer went to the king and told him of Jeremiah's sad plight and with Zedekiah's leave, the prophet was hauled out of the pit with ropes and taken into the house of the court guards.

Meanwhile the beleaguered city was being hard pressed. The supply of grain was exhausted and starvation threatened the people. Enemy arrows wrought havoc among the warriors on the walls, and on the streets and in the houses the people were dying of hunger and plague. Men and women, like shadows, stalked through the city, often falling down

from sheer exhaustion. Children cried and wailed for bread, and there were even cases where mothers cooked the bodies of their dead children to appease the hunger of the living ones. The Hebrew warriors were so worn out that they could hardly defend their fortifications and at last, in the month of Tammuz, 586 B. C., the Babylonians broke through. The city wall fell before them and they entered the stricken capital to massacre everyone they met, sparing neither women nor children in their fury. Rapacious hordes of Edomites, who had joined the Babylonians, entered Jerusalem with them, pillaging and robbing with the Babylonians. King Zedekiah and a considerable number of soldiers and citizens of importance took flight under cover of darkness, but they were overtaken by Babylonian horsemen near Jericho. Zedekiah and his sons were taken to the Syrian city of Riblah, where Nebuchadnezzar then lived. There the king inflicted cruel punishment upon them; he ordered the Judean rebel's sons to be executed before their father's eyes and afterwards they put out Zedekiah's eyes and took him in chains to Babylon.

Not even this savage revenge sufficed to appease the anger of Nebuchadnezzar. He sent Nebuzar-adan, the chief of his bodyguard, into Jerusalem with orders to raze the city to the ground; the fierce chieftain arrived in the cap-

ital and took all the treasures from the temple and all the precious vessels and ornaments and sent them to Babylon. On the ninth day of the month of Ab he set fire to the splendid temple which had stood in the centre of Israel since the days of Solomon, and the king's palace and other fine buildings which had been the pride and beauty of the city were soon but a heap of smoking ruins. He demolished the walls and carried off many captives. The High-Priest, Seraiah, his assistants and other important citizens to the number of about sixty in all, were sent to Riblah, where Nebuchadnezzar had them executed. The rest of the prisoners who belonged to the upper classes, were committed to exile in Babylon. Only the poorest and lowliest citizens and the peasants were left in Jerusalem and in the other Judean cities. Jeremiah, the prophet, was also taken prisoner, but was set free almost at once by order of Nebuchadnezzar, because he had never conspired against Babylon but had preached submission always. The prophet was overwhelmed with grief at the unspeakable calamity which had befallen his country and he deeply mourned the fall of Jerusalem which he had so long foreseen and striven unavailingly to prevent.

The songs of sorrow written by Jeremiah after the fall of Jerusalem were preserved in the Bible, and the following are fragments of

them which are read in the synagogues even now on the ninth day of Ab:

"How does the city sit solitary that was full of people! How is she become as a widow! She that was great among the nations; and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary! She weepeth sore in the night and her tears are on her cheeks; among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her; all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they are become her enemies! The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts; all her gates are desolate, her priests sigh, her virgins are afflicted and she is in bitterness! And from the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed. . . . Her gates are sunk into the ground; her King and her princes are among the Gentiles; the law is no more; her prophets also find no vision from the Lord! The elders of the daughter of Zion sit upon the ground."

§ 90.

Gedaliah the Viceroy. The Desolation of Judea.

After the destruction of Jerusalem and the banishment of the important citizens, only the common people, such as farmers and vine-dressers, remained in Judea. Nebuchadnezzar did not, however, wish the country to become a wilderness, so he allowed the people there to

own land on condition that they cultivated it. A Judean statesman named Gedaliah was appointed viceroy of the country. A friend of Jeremiah, the prophet, Gedaliah had belonged to the party which had advocated submission to Babylon and for that reason Nebuchadnezzar chose him to rule Judea. The king also offered Jeremiah his choice of either living in Babylon under royal protection or of staying in Judea as Gedaliah's advisor in the government of the province. Jeremiah preferred to stay in his own country with his friend.

Jerusalem having been utterly destroyed, Gedaliah went to live in the city of Mizpah, near the ruined capital. During his administration, the devastated country began to recover, and many who had fled during the war returned to their villages and tilled their land once more. Judean warriors who had gone into hiding in the mountains and wilderness came to Gedaliah and pledged their allegiance to Babylon whereupon they were given the estates of men who had been banished. Among these returned soldiers was a large group under the leadership of one Johanan-ben-Kareah. But not all the Judean warriors who sought their homes were sincere in their protestations of loyalty to the representative of the Babylonian king, and amongst the ungenuine ones was Ishmael-ben-Nethaniah, a descendant of the kings.

Actuated either by envy or by a desire to stir up a last revolt against Babylonia, he resolved to murder Gedaliah, but though the viceroy received warning through his friend Johanan of Ishmael's intention, he took no precaution against it. One day Gedaliah arranged a feast in Mizpah to celebrate some great holiday, and Ishmael and some of his followers were among the guests. While the feast was in progress, he and the partners in his plot, suddenly drew their swords and slew not only Gedaliah but also all the Babylonians and Judeans present. Then Ishmael and eight of his followers fled to the land of the Ammonites. (581 B. C.)

Johanan-ben-Koreah, the friend of the murdered viceroy, became the chief of the Judeans in Mizpah. They found themselves in a desperate situation, and dreaded the consequence of the assassination, being certain that Nebuchadnezzar, as soon as the news reached him would avenge himself on the Judeans of Mizpah and again devaste the country. They decided therefore to migrate to Egypt and Jeremiah, the prophet, agreed to join them. Thus a small group of Hebrews returned to the very land their ancestors had escaped from eight hun-

dred years before. The Pharaoh gave them permission to live in certain specified cities, and there they stayed, hoping that the day would soon come when the Egyptians would rise up and overthrow the supremacy of Nebuchadnezzar and send them back to their own country. Some, however, found the life in Egypt so much to their taste that they adopted the native customs and beliefs and even worshipped the Egyptian gods, though Jeremiah rebuked them fiercely as renegades whose depravity was beyond the reach of adversity to reform. Up to the day of his death, the long-suffering prophet did not cease to instruct his people and guide them in the paths of righteousness. He often assured them that the hardships and disaster the Hebrew nation had suffered were a purifying and ennobling influence and that the Lord would have mercy upon them and return them to their own homes once their souls had been purged of evil. Jeremiah did not live to see those happier days, for he died in Egypt.

The situation of Judea was becoming rapidly worse. The news of Gedaliah's murder stirred Nebuchadnezzar to such rage that he sent an avenging army under Nebuzzar-adan

into the country and there the ruthless leader committed several hundred Hebrew families as prisoners of war to Babylonian exile with the rest. Judea had now lost all the best of its population and many of its provinces were utterly desolated. Wild animals roamed over the deserted land where men were seen no more, and at night the ruins of Jerusalem echoed the howling of jackals. The kingdom of Judea was no more, but the scattered nation of Judea was still alive and the future held deliverance for them when they would be released from their long captivity and return at last to their own country once again.

CHAPTER XIII

The Babylonian Captivity—586-537 B. C.

§ 91.

The Hebrews in Babylonia.

AFTER the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, the Hebrew nation was threatened in its very existence. The greater portion, which had formed the Kingdom of Israel, or of the Ten Tribes, had been long ago torn from its country by the Assyrians and scattered over distant lands, and when Babylonia, as new mistress of the world, superseded Assyria, the Kingdom of Judea shared the fate of the sister-kingdom and the Judeans became exiles in their turn. They wandered over Babylonia, Media, Persia, Syria and Egypt, and many were sold to aliens as slaves. It seemed then as though the Judean people would be lost among other nations, as the inhabitants of the former Kingdom of Israel had been. It was not so written, however.

The Judean prisoners in Babylon, far from intermixing with the heathens in whose midst they found themselves, held strictly aloof from

them, and remained loyal to their religion, and their social laws and customs. Life in exile inspired them with a new devotion to their own home and faith, and national consciousness burned in them with a new intensity. They mourned the loss of their country and repented of the erring ways which had led to all their misfortunes. From time to time, the Judeans were joined by descendants of the exiled Israelites who had made their homes in the neighboring provinces which had once belonged to Assyria, and who had not yet completely lost their identity amongst the aliens.

The conqueror of Judea, Nebuchadnezzar, did not oppress the Hebrews whom he sent to Babylonia; in fact, he demanded of them one thing only; to recognize the supremacy of the Babylonian King and not make any attempt to restore their kingdom. In religious and social affairs they were allowed perfect freedom. Very many of them owned arable land and cultivated it, while others engaged in trade and commerce. Wherever they settled, whether in Babylon, the capital of the country, or in other cities, they lived in separate communities, with their own elders, their own priests and their own places of worship in which the congregations met for services, and psalms were sung and the Holy Scriptures read. It became the custom in the temples to stand facing in the direction of

Jerusalem, as though transported mentally back into the great temple which was no more. They kept four days in the year as occasions of fasting and sorrow, each dedicated to the memory of some event in their country's downfall; the anniversaries of the siege of Jerusalem and of its fall, of the destruction of the temple and of the death of Gedaliah. The assembling of the exiles for common worship was a powerful factor in cementing their spiritual unity, for at such times the homeless nation spoke and read their own language, exchanged reminiscences of their distant land and heard the sermons of their preachers and prophets, which, full of ardor and hope, kept alive their belief that a brighter future would one day dawn for them.

Deprived of their country, they lived in their recollections, and their fervent longing to return found expression in many a touching psalm, one of which became, as has ever since remained, the national song of sorrow of the Hebrews:

"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive, required of us a song; and they that wasted us, required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her

cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth."

A contemporary legend tells how zealously the Hebrew exiles observed their laws and customs; it describes the life of a descendant of the Kings of Judea, named Daniel, and three other high-born Judean youths, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, who lived at the King's court in Babylon where they were educated and taught the Chaldean (Babylonian) language as well as all the other branches of knowledge upon which the Chaldean priests prided themselves. Yet the young men refused to renounce the commandments of their faith; though their food come to them from the King's table, they declined both meat and wine which the Hebrew laws forbade, and would take only vegetables and water. One day Nebuchadnezzar tried to force Daniel's friends to bow before a Babylonian idol, but they refused, whereupon he caused them to be thrown into a live furnace. But the youths came out unhurt, not even their hair having been singed, and at that, the King was convinced of the omnipotence of the God of the Hebrews and never again did he attempt to force the worship of alien gods upon any of them.

Among the Judean exiles in Babylonia lived the great prophet, Ezekiel, who had been conveyed thither with King Jehoiachin, before the

sacks of Jerusalem.* Ezekiel was the spiritual leader of the Babylonian exiles, and his inspired sermons constantly roused the wanderers' flagging spirits, for he never tired of predicting the coming rehabilitation of the nation. One of Ezekiel's most striking prophesies is his famous vision of the resurrection of the dry bones:

"The hand of the Lord was upon me and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, and caused me to pass by them round about; and, behold, there were very many in the open valley, and, lo, they were very dry. And He said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, Thou knowest. Again He said unto me: Prophesy upon these bones and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! Behold I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring flesh upon you, and cover you with skin and put breath in you and you shall live. So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them and the skin covered them above; but there was no breath in them.

*See § 88.

Then He said unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, son of man, and say to the wind, Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.

Then He said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they (the exiles) say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off from our parts (country). Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus said the Lord God: Behold, O my people I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves and bring you into the land of Israel. And I shall put my spirit in you, and you shall live and I shall place you in your own land, then shall you know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it."*

§ 92.

The Fall of Babylonia and the Hopes of the Judeans.

After Nebuchadnezzar's death (562 B. C.) the power of Babylonia in the East began to decline. Nebuchadnezazr's son, Evil-Merodoch, reigned only two years. He freed Jehoiachin, the former king of Judea whom his father had taken prisoner and kept in a dungeon for thirty-

*Ezekiel, XXXVII.

six years, and gave him a post of honor in his court.

At that time the break-up of Babylonia was beginning to prepare itself in various phases of unrest, and statesmen and generals entered into ceaseless contention for the kingship. Evil-Merodach was deposed and within five years three different kings occupied the throne. The last to rule over Babylonia was Nabonidus (555 B. C.), and by the end of his reign this mighty empire of the East had entirely disentegrated.

For a new kingdom had arisen nearby which was very soon to dominate the whole of western Asia. The vast territory to the east of Mesopotamia, called Iran, was originally occupied by two nations, the Medes and the Persians. The former, in alliance with the Babylonians, had destroyed the kingdom of Assyria many years before, and had afterwards established their dominion in Iran, subjugating the Persians there. Later on, however, the Persians became the predominant race, and under the leadership of Cyrus, their valiant chieftain, they conquered Media and seized its capital, Actabana. Cyrus then became king of the united kingdom of both the Medes and Persians about 500 B. C. and having established his position there, he set out to make fresh conquests. He vanquished Asia Minor and Syria, and then planned to attack the powerful kingdom of Babylonia itself. He

occupied several Babylonian provinces on his way to the capital, and the news of his brilliant victories filled the Judeans with great joy. It was said that the new conqueror was renowned for his generosity and fair treatment of all oppressed peoples, and the exiles' heart beat high with the hope that once having defeated Babylon he would set them all free and send them back to their own country. One of their prophets fervently praised the virtues of Cyrus and called him the liberator of the Hebrews whom the Lord had sent at last.

This great prophet, whose name is not recorded, though sometimes he is called Isaiah II, because his sermons have been preserved in the second part of the book of the famous Isaiah of King Hezekiah's time, may justly claim the title of the "prophet of the regeneration." If the utterances of Ezekiel reflected the gloom of life in captivity, Isaiah II's glow with the light of the coming dawn and sound an uplifting summons to freedom and a new life. The prophet hears the voice of God speaking to the leaders of the people: "Comfort ye, my people. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned. . . . The voice of Him that crieth in the wilderness (between Judea and Babylonia). Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our

God. Thus saith the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of Kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut, for Jacob my servant's sake and Israel mine elect. I have raised him (Cyrus) up in righteousness and I will direct all his ways; he shall build My city and he shall let go My captives, saith the Lord of hosts."*

The prophet dwells upon the idea that Jehova is is not only the God of the Hebrew people but of the whole world, directing the destinies of mankind. The Hebrew nation is but the "chosen" of them all, whose mission it is to reveal the true faith to the others and to demonstrate the ideals of supreme truth upon the earth. This "chosen" people would find itself destined to suffer torment and persecution, but would ultimately triumph and become as the beacon to light the way for every other nation, as the standard-bearer of truth for all mankind to follow. Though temporarily eclipsed the light would shine again upon the summit of Mount Zion, in a liberated Judea. Purified by much suffering, the Hebrew people would return to their own land and there become the pattern of spiritual integrity to the whole world. What the prophet promises them is not military

*Isaiah XLV.

glory and power, nor domination over other nations by sword and violence, but the conquest of human minds and souls by the dissemination of the ideals of truth and justice among men.

§ 93.

The Liberation of the Judeans by Cyrus, King of Persia.

Though the redoubtable Persian hosts were advancing upon Babylon, the King of Babylonia paid no attention to the adequate defence of his capital, but contented himself with the belief that, surrounded by its double row of thick walls, it would prove impervious to assault. In this bland assurance of safety the King and courtiers did not for a moment abandon their customary gay festivities and merrymaking. There is a legend about one of these feasts which runs as follows: Belshazzar, the King of Babylonia, made a great feast for his courtiers and ordered all the sacred vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had once carried away from the temple of Jerusalem to be brought to the court. While he and his guests sat around the board and drank wine from the holy goblets, a human hand appeared upon the wall facing them and wrote upon it words of which nobody there could tell the meaning. The King was greatly frightened and sent for his astrologers

and wise men to read and interpret the inscription, but none of them was able to do so, and as a last resort they sent for the Hebrew prophet Daniel to see whether he might succeed where all the rest had failed. He immediately read the inscription and said to the King: "These words are: mene, mene, tekel upharsin, and they mean "numbered, weighed and divided." God hath numbered thy Kingdom and finished it. Thou are weighed in the balance and found wanting. Thy kingdom is to be divided and given to the Medes and Persians." This prediction very soon came to pass.

The mighty army of Cyrus reached Babylon and besieged the city, but as Belshazzar foresaw, the great wall stood firm against all attack. Then the Persian king ordered a canal to be dug outside the impregnable city and connected with the river Euphrates which flowed through the capital. The water from the river rushed into the canal and thence into a deep lake nearby. Thus very little water was left in the river, which became so shallow that it could be easily forded. One night when the heedless Babylonians were riotously celebrating one of their deities with a great feast, the Persian warriors entered the city by way of the shallow river-bed, and Babylon was taken. Cyrus declared himself King of Babylonia, which was duly annexed to Persia. (538 B. C.)

The large Hebrew population of Babylonia hailed the Persian conqueror with tremendous enthusiasm and he was much pleased at this evidence of their loyalty. He decided to liberate them from their long captivity and allow them to go back to Judea, which, as a province of Babylon, had become part of the Persian Empire. Shortly after the conquest, the King's messengers were sent all over the country, proclaiming that by order of Cyrus, all Hebrews living in Babylonian or Persian cities were free to return to Judea and rebuild the demolished city of Jerusalem and the holy temple. Cyrus also ordered that the money for the new shrine be provided from his own treasury, the supervisor of which was further instructed to give to the returning Hebrews all the gold and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from the temple of Jerusalem long ago.

Tens of thousands of the exiles prepared to leave Babylonia for their own country under the leadership of two men: Zerubabbel, a grandson of King Jehoiachin, and Joshua, a grandson of Seraiah, the last High-Priest of Jerusalem. A great number remained behind, however, though they had not forgotten their native land and hoped to return there in due time. Those who were not yet ready to go supplied the others with money, food and beasts of burden for their journeying, and Cyrus added an

escort of a thousand horsemen to protect them on their way from the attacks of robber tribes.

Throngs of Hebrews then set forth from Babylonia for the long-forsaken homeland which the eyes of two generations had so ardently longed to behold. (537 B. C.) The unexpected deliverance had come like God's miracle, or like some incredible and marvellous dream. One of the later psalms depicts in the following verses the returning exiles' exultant mood:

"When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing. Then said they among the heathen, the Lord hath done great things for them. The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy."*

*Psalms CXXVI.

CHAPTER XIV

Judea Under Persian Domination— (537-332 B. C.)

§ 94.

The Restoration of Judea and the New Temple.

FTER living in Babylonia for forty-nine years, tens of thousands of Hebrews returned to Judea with their leaders, Prince Zebubabbel and the High-Priest Joshua. (537 B. C.) They were followed by many others who had been scattered over various other lands, Egypt, Asia Minor and the islands of the Mediterranean. From every direction the exiles came hastening home to Judea, filled with the dream of living peacefully at last in their own land, under the protection of Cyrus, the just ruler of the Persian Empire.

They found their country in a lamentable state; where once the Holy City had stood, nothing but a heap of ruins now remained; many other cities and villages had been completely depopulated; the fields having been so long uncultivated had become arid and bare. Some of the Judean provinces had fallen into the hands

of hostile neighboring tribes. Such was the condition of Judea when Zurubabbel and Jeshua took up the task of restoring their devastated country.

Their first action was to resume the practice of worship in Jerusalem, and they therefore built an altar for offerings there against the approach of the autumn festival of Succoth. Then they set on foot the construction of a small new temple upon the site of the old one that the Babylonians had destroyed. The people flocked into Jerusalem from all over Judea to attend the ceremony of laying the foundation stone. The priests wore all their formal vestments, the Levites sang their hymns of thanskgiving which have come down to us in the book of Psalms, and the prophets in their sermons, predicted a happy future for the jubilant people. But in the midst of the joyous crowds, venerable men stood weeping loudly; for they had seen Solomon's great temple in all its glory and could not but compare that splendid past with the present humble "House of Jehovah." The chronicler adds: "The people could not hear the shouts of joy because of the loud weeping."

It was no easy task for the people to build even this modest temple, for their homecoming had been beset with trouble. The borders of Judea were inhabited by Samaritans, descendants of those heathen tribes which had been sent

by the Assyrian Kings to live in the conquered kingdom of Israel, and gradually they had intermixed with the Hebrews there.* Although the Samaritans had adopted the Hebrew beliefs, they still preserved many heathen customs and manners, and when they learned that the Hebrews were building a new temple in Jerusalem, they wished it to be theirs also, on condition that it should be used equally by both Hebrews and Samaritans. But Zerubbabel and Jeshua refused to admit the Samaritans into the holy building, for they considered them only half-Hebrew. The insulted tribe then tried to avenge themselves by denouncing the Hebrews to the Persian authorities and doing all they could to hinder the building of the temple.

Meanwhile the plight of the returned exiles had been growing steadily worse; Cyrus, their protector, had died and his son Cambyses had succeeded him. (529 B. C.) The new king undertook a campaign against Egypt and Ethiopia and in order to reach those countries, his army had to pass through Judea where it created considerable disturbance. The construction of the temple in Jerusalem was suspended and resumed only upon the accession of King Darius I to the Persian throne in 521 B. C. This ruler, like Cyrus, was the Hebrews' friend, and willingly granted the prayer of Zerubbabel and

*See § 79.

Jeshua that they might be allowed to go on with the temple. He even assisted the work with money from his own treasury. Two prophets, Haggai and Zecharia, kept up the people's courage with their sermons, exhorting them to labor unremittingly for the completion of their appointed task of raising a new "House of God," and eagerly the Hebrews bent all their efforts to the work which they completed in four years. In 516 B. C., seventy years after the destruction of the first temple, the new one was finished, thus justifying the prediction of the prophets.

§ 95.

Ezra.

After the death of Zerubbabel and Jeshua, the people of Judea found no other able and resolute rulers. The country was still a dependency of Persia and its domestic affairs were managed by the High-Priests, Jeshua's descendants. These spiritual rulers concerned themselves only with the proper performance of the temple rituals, and the divine services and offerings, but did nothing to bring order into the lives of the people by regulating the social code, nor did they attempt to restore the material prosperity of the ruined country. Surrounded by aliens on every side, the Hebrews could not long hold aloof from them; they began to inter-

marry with Moabite, Ammonite and Samaritan women, although the laws of Moses forbade them to do so. The children of such marriages spoke the language of their mothers and knew no Hebrew. Malachi, the last of the Judean prophets, pointed out to the people the error of their ways and severely censured the unworthy priests who had forgotten their chief duty which was to be the teachers and leaders of the nation, so sorely in need of guidance. He predicted that a "messenger of God" would soon appear, a great reformer who would purify and restore to order the chaotic state of Judea.

This reformer actually did appear out of the "land of captivity." He was Ezra, a descendant of Hebrew High-Priests, and was one of those who had remained behind in Babylonia when the first exodus took place. He was famous as a scholar and as a transcriber of sacred books which latter had earned him the surname of "Sopher," (a bookman, a scribe).

When Ezra heard of the state into which the Hebrew community in Jerusalem was declining, he decided that the time had come for him to go there to live, in order that he might induce them to reorganize their mode of life. The Persian king, Artaxerxes I, granted him power to appoint officials and Judges in Judea who were to rule the people according to the Mosaic code.

Fifteen hundred Babylonian Hebrews accompanied Ezra to Jerusalem in 458 B. C.

When Ezra reached Jerusalem, he called a great meeting of the people who assembled in the public square in front of the temple, and there addressed them with impassioned words, exhorting them to live in faithfulness to the spirit of the great commandments which Moses had received from God and cease to intermix with alien tribes. He demanded that Hebrews who had married foreign women divorce them immediately, and many hastened to obey him. The alien wives were put away and went back to their own kinsfolk. This drew down upon the Hebrews the bitter hatred of the tribes to which these women belonged, Moabites, Ammonites and Samaritans alike, who began to raid and destroy the capital and subject the inhabitants to all manner of persecutions. Jerusalem was not fortified and the people were unable to defend themselves against these attacks. They saw that if their spiritual life was ever to be reorganized as Ezra desired, the first essential would be to assure the adequate defence of the country and the fortification of its capital. This task was undertaken by another great leader, Nehemiah.

§ 96.

Nehemiah.

Nehemiah lived in Shushan, the capital of Persia where he held the post of chief butler in the palace of King Artaxerxes. The accounts of the misery of his brethren in Judea grieved him very much and one day as he was serving Artaxerxes with wine, the king asked him why he looked so sad. Nehemiah replied: "How can I help being sad when the city where my ancestors lie buried is destroyed?" The king sympathized with his sorrow and granted him leave to visit Jerusalem and help, if he wished, in the work of fortification and reformation. He was given the post of Governor of Judea.

Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem in 455 B. C. and at once began to urge the people to lose no time in fortifying the city. For two months every able-bodied person labored day and night to raise a wall around the capital, and all the while their enemies, particularly the Samaritans, led by their chief, Sanballat, employed every possible means they could devise to impede their progress. They attacked the builders with impunity until Nehemiah armed them and set one group to stand guard while another went on with the work. Some of the builders would lay their stones with one hand, holding a sword for self-defense in the other.

After two months of the most strenuous work, the fortification wall around Jerusalem was completed, even to the new city gates. Guards stood sentinel at the gates which were locked at night and opened only in the morning after sunrise, and thus they made the capital of Judea, so recently defenceless, a powerfully fortified and stoutly locked-in city, which the surrounding tribes realized had become a place no longer to be harried with ease and impunity.

When the wall was finished, the people began rebuilding the houses within. Jerusalem being now very sparsely populated, Nehemiah sent sections of the rural communities to settle there. A prolonged famine had fallen upon the country and the Judeans were suffering greatly. Rich men who possessed vast stores of grain sold some to the poor on trust, but whenever the buyers found themselves unable to pay when the money fell due, the creditors would take away their houses and other property, and sometimes even sell them into slavery. Nehemiah was so shocked by these proceedings that he ordered the rich men immediately to cease their cruel treatment of the poor and helpless, to set them free and give back their belongings.

Having reduced the country to some sort of order, Nehemiah then joined Ezra, and together they began the task of achieving the spiritual regeneration of the people. In autumn, in the

month of Tishri, they summoned many men and women to Jerusalem, and when they were all assembled in the city square, Nehemiah read aloud several chapters of the Torah (Pentateuch) and called upon the Levites to expound them to the listeners. This ceremony moved them deeply and they stood up in their places to show their reverence for the Scriptures. Tears of remorse streamed down their faces, for they realized at last how far they had strayed from the path indicated by the lofty moral teachings of the Torah. The twenty-fourth day of Tishri was proclaimed a day of universal penitence, on which everyone was to fast and wear deep mourning. The Levites addressed the congregations, vividly recalling incidents of the nation's past, the Hebrews' deeds of glory, their fatal errors. Then a written "covenant" was read to them, exhorting them, under oath, to observe faithfully the laws and precepts of the Torah. This covenant was signed by the representatives of the people, and by the priests and Levites.

Then Nehemiah took appropriate measures to compel such Hebrews as still lived with their alien wives to send them away, to secure the strict observance of the Sabbath rest, and to effect the dismissal of the bad priests. One of the High-Priests, Menashah, who had married a daughter of Sanballat, the Samaritan

chief, was exiled from Jerusalem. (430 B. C.) Then the chief of the Samaritans built a separate temple for his tribe on Mount Garizim, near Sichem, and appointed Menashah its High-Priest. From that time on the Samaritans drifted farther and farther away from the Hebrews, from their beliefs and social customs. Of the whole of the Scriptures they recognized only the Pentateuch and the Book of Moses, and later on they made some changes even in those. For many years the Samaritans continued to treat the Hebrews with hostility and went out of their way to harm them whenever they could.

§ 97.

The Great Council. Purim.

After the return of the Hebrews from Babylonia, the activities of the prophets, the erstwhile teachers of the people, gradually ceased. The last prophet of Judea was Malachi. Instead of prophets, scholars and students of the Mosaic law and of the ancient sacred books, acquired importance in public affairs. They were called "bookmen" (sopherim.) Following the example of Ezra they popularized the knowledge of the religious, moral and social laws which had been either preserved in books or handed down in legends. Politically, Judea was a dependency of Persia, but all the country's domestic affairs were conducted in abso-

lute accordance with the Mosaic laws. At the head of the community were the High-Priests who ruled with the help of a supreme council consisting of an assembly of elders called the Great Council. Its members were men of learning, familiar with the law, and of the highest standing in the community. An ancient legend defines the threefold purpose that guided the Great Council in its activities; the establishment of truth and mercy in the courts, the dissemination of learning and the "building of a wall around the Torah," by which they meant the strengthening of the ancient laws by the application of stringent new rules. The Council appointed judges to settle disputes between citizens according to Biblical law; it also saw to the education of the young and strove in every way to increase the knowledge of reading and writing. In order to facilitate reading, the alphabet was altered, and the original characters, which were very intricate and difficult to decipher, replaced by simpler and more sightly ones. The new alphabet is called the "square" or Assyrian, and has been used in the writing of Hebrew ever since. As a result of these reforms of the Great Council assisted by the bookmen, the knowledge of Biblical literature spread continually among the people.

For a whole century after the death of Ezra and Nehemiah, the Hebrews lived peaceably in

their own land under the dominion of Persia. The Persian kings did not interfere in the domestic affairs of Judea, but remained content with the stipulated annual tribute. In Persia proper, as well as in Babylonia, another of its dependencies, populous Hebrew communities also existed, enjoying the same protection as the Hebrews in their own country. The Bible records only one persecution of Hebrews in Persia:

In the palace of Ahasuerus, the king, there lived an official named Haman, who hated the Hebrews. One day he said to his master: "There is a certain people scattered and dispersed over all the provinces of your kingdom; their customs are different from the customs of other peoples, and they do not keep the King's laws. If it please the King, let him order that this people be destroyed." And Ahasuerus sent out an order, giving the Persians permission to kill and rob the Hebrews dwelling in any cities over which the ruler of Persia held sway. Thus once more the Hebrews found themselves faced with extermination, but their defence was taken up by one Mordecai, one of the most respected men in Sushan, who had once done the King a great service and was acquainted at the court. This Mordecai had a ward, an orphan girl of his kinsfolk, named Esther whom he had brought up since childhood. She was very beautiful and

he had taken her to the King's palace where she became the favorite wife. When Esther learned from Mordecai the terrible fate awaiting her people, she begged the king to have mercy upon them and cancel his permission to have them massacred, for though she had long ceased to live amongst them, she was bound to them by ties of blood and felt that she belonged to them. She revealed to Ahasuerus the wicked machinations of Haman and besought him to revoke his order, and he, knowing that she spoke the truth, and recollecting his debt to Mordecai for the service he had done him, did as his beloved queen implored. Moreover, he condemned Haman to be hanged and allowed the Hebrews to organize for self-defense against the enemies who had plotted their ruin. And in the end it happened that on the very day Haman had set for the destruction of the Hebrews, the thirteenth day of Adar, it was they who attacked the plotters instead and routed them completely, both in the capital and in the provinces. To commemorate the deliverance of the Persian Hebrews from annihilation, the following day was declared a holiday and has been celebrated by the Hebrews ever since. The name of this holiday is Purim, and on each anniversary the Book of Esther, describing the event in all its details, is read in every synagogue.

§ 98.

How the Bible Was Compiled.

Ezra, the scholar, and the bookmen, his followers, were the first to collect the spiritual treasures of the Hebrews which had come down to them from the earliest times. There had been many great teachers among the Hebrews, beginning with Moses and ending with the last of the prophets, whose teachings and predictions had been preserved partly in writing and partly by word of mouth from generation to generation in the form of legends. Many of these had been lost and forgotten, and in order that as many as possible might be given permanent form, Ezra and the bookmen began eagerly to collect all that remained, classify them and make written records of all that had not been set down before. Thus the Bible came to be compiled, the greatest book in the world, and the original source of the Hebrew religious doctrines, ancient legislation and ancient history of the nation. When it had been collected and classified, the biblical documents were divided into three parts:

The first part, called the Pentateuch, or the Teachings of Moses: This consists of five books. The first, Genesis, contains the story of the life of mankind from the creation of the world to the time of Abraham, and continues the story of the life of the Hebrew nation from Abraham to the

death of Jacob and Joseph in Egypt. The second book, Exodus, tells of the sufferings of the Israelites in Egypt, the exodus and the revelations on Sinai, the "tent of the congregation" in the desert. It also contains the fundamental laws of the Mosaic code.

The third book, Leviticus, is chiefly concerned with the laws governing sacrifice in the temple, holidays, family and social relations. The fourth book, Numbers, describes the wandering of the Hebrews in the desert between Egypt and Canaan. The fifth, Deuteronomy, is a reiteration of the main laws stated in the preceding books with the addition of others and new rules, in the form of lofty moral precepts which Moses left his people just before he died.

The second part: The Prophets. This part is subdivided into two groups, the first consisting of the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings. These record seven centuries of Hebrew history, from the conquest of Canaan to the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian captivity. The second group contains the books of the three "major" prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel; also those of the twelve "minor" prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephanian, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. The great sermons of all these prophets

represent an important addition to the teachings of Moses as expounded in the Pentateuch. Taken together, the Torah and the discourses of the prophets, form the complete theology of Biblical Judaism.

The Third Part Called the Scriptures. This is a collection of various books dealing with the religion, moral code, philosophy and poetry of the Hebrews, from the most ancient times to a fairly late period. It begins with the long book of Psalms, or sacred songs, many of which were sung in temples by choirs of Levites; many of these psalms are attributed to King David and are associated with various events of his life. The next book is called The Proverbs of King Solomon, and contains numerous wise precepts and rules of conduct. It resembles the book of Job which tells of the life of suffering led by a man who has been bereft of all his worldly goods, and expresses his realization of the vanity and futility of human life. The conversations between Job and his friends reveal a profound religious and moral philosophy. The five following books are called "scrolls" (Megilloth). In the "Song of Songs" Solomon celebrates the beauties of nature, the joys of youth and love; in Ecclesiastes, the same king, grown old, meditates darkly upon the aimlessness of living. The little book of Ruth depicts the tranquil life of peasants during the period of the

Judges and the "Lamentations" of Jeremiah voice the grief of the Judeans at the sack of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. The Book of Esther contains the story of the Persian Hebrews' deliverance from the evil conspiracy of Haman. The final group of the part called "Scriptures" consists of chronicles of a later date, the books of Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah, record the life of the Hebrews under Babylonian and Persian dominion. The last book of this group, called "Chronicles," is a review in brief of the history of the Hebrews, from the most ancient times to the period of the Babylonian captivity.

These are the various parts which together form the Bible, which is the literature of the Hebrew nation and the record of their spiritual development over a thousand years. On account of the sublime philosophy which it contains and of its profound morality, it became the sacred book, not of the Hebrews alone, but of all the nations of the earth which profess monotheism. And the language in which the Book is written, the beautiful ancient Hebrew, so powerful, so rich in imagery and so vivid, came to be known as the "sacred language."

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